

BARDS AND THE BIRDS

SELECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

FREDERICK NOËL PATON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

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AND

HUBERT PATON

"Ye gentle Birdes! the world's faire ornament,
And heaven's glorie."

SPENSER.

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TO

MY PARENTS,

WHO HAVE TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN TO
LOVE THE BIRDS, NATURE, AND
ALL THINGS WHOLESOME,
THIS VOLUME IS
INSCRIBED.

CONTENTS

" Then, warmly walled with books,
While my wood-fire supplies the sun's defect,
Whispering old forest-sagas in its dreams,
I take my May down from the happy shelf
Where perch the world's rare song-birds in a row
Waiting my choice to open with full breast,
And beg an alms of spring-time, ne'er denied
Indoors by vernal Chaucer, whose fresh woods
Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year."

LOWELL.

INTRODUCTION

In writing an introduction to passages from the works of acknowledged masters, there is always danger of seeming to hold a candle to the sun. And when those masters treat of a theme so fresh as that of Nature's Choristers—a theme that touches our heart rather than our mind, and the very essence of whose charm is the subtlety thereof—one is confronted with the additional difficulty of speaking of that theme without appearing so impertinent as to speak for it and its fit exponents. The amateur who proposes to manipulate the work of the men who have made English literature supreme had need walk humbly and circumspectly, lest he seem to confound his office of priest with that of patron. The poets may be trusted to speak for themselves and their subject more effectively than he could hope to do. A sculptor might as well hope to express in bronze or granite the indefinable essence of music, as an uninspired writer of prose to construe in words the ecstatic song of birds, or imbue his periods with that sublimate of sunlight and ether which even the great masters of poetry have sometimes failed to catch in the

gossamer web of their verse. Singers alone can hymn the songsters; for to them alone do the gods give, and their fellow-men permit, to speak in transport like the larks and nightingales. The writer of prose must be judicial and restrained. He may not shake his thoughts out rhythmically and extravagantly like the thrush. How, then, could he give an impression of the wild gurgling melody at dawn or moonrise, the fluttering song in cloudland, that sets his heartstrings quivering to its tune, or the sweet merry whisperings that come to him with scent of fir and hyacinth in the sunny noon of spring?

It is this that makes the song-birds so peculiarly the theme of poets: and surely it is true that the rapture of the birds' own song has lent a richer inspiration to the bards when they sang of birds. It is striking to note how frequently the idea of birds and their singing occurs in the freshest and most delightful passages in the literatures of all countries from the earliest periods; and we know that in the time of Aristophanes birds were the fashion. The bird seems naturally to take its place as the symbol of joy. When a poet writes of happiness, he thinks of birds. When he writes of birds, a crowd of sunny memories rushes to his heart; everything morbid and unwholesome flees away; and he sings of happiness. Sometimes it is the joy of hope: sometimes the bliss of a sunny present: sometimes it is the happiness of days

that are gone; but always it is a tender, earnest feeling, partaking of the simplicity and gentle resignation of childhood. And though we may make a shift to extract consolation from the consciousness of wisdom that grows with years, no depth of knowledge can bring such peace to us, or lay so soothing a hand upon the fevered brow of sorrow, as does a breath from the lost Eden of green innocence. Those know this best whose reason does most firmly disown the very simplicity they regard so wistfully; as he who has drunk most deeply of life's fiery vintage finds keenest pleasure in regarding and in dreaming of the innocence he misses in himself. So also we often find the most confirmed cynic toying with mere sentimentalism, and the veriest *roué* delighting in the simpers of the *ingénue*. When we are young, we long to feel the stress and tug of life; and we turn away from the quiet valley of simplicity, instinct telling us that there we can learn little that is new. But in a few years, when we have had enough of the fight we sought so restlessly, our hearts hark back and we would almost give our dearly-purchased knowledge in exchange, if we might lie down once again in the sunny sleepy hollow and bask inanely.

> "Did any bird come flying
> After Adam and Eve,
> When the door was shut against them
> And they sat down to grieve?"

There the birds were singing always; and that is

why we love to hear them sing again, and to be put in mind of the feelings that their singing stirred in us.

And yet it is not the gift of song alone that sets birds apart from the rest of nature, and invests them with an attribute of the semi-supernatural. We also have song; and we can make even dead things of string or wood or metal throb with a melody wider and no less passionate than the Nightingale's. More, we can chime two notes together, waking such a twinge of sensuous pleasure as no feathered minstrelsy could compass. But we cannot fly.

There is, in all the so-called "brute creation," no other faculty so purely enviable as this of flight—so palpably an advantage over the conditions of self-complacent but grovelling humanity. A dolphin may be envied for a moment when the days are warm; but after all, we too can perform certain lumbering operations that may pass for swimming. Our method of landward progress, however—compassing our journey step by step, about two feet at a time—is only a degree better than that of the inglorious loup-worm that spans its tour by inches. The highest velocity of our swiftest runner is to the Swallow's flight what a slug's pace is to ours. Our speediest vessels are mere circling points for birds that range about them: and the Hawks make a stalking-horse and laughing-stock of the "Flying Scotsman," as they

keep pace with it, and pounce upon the linnets that its thunders shake from the hedge-rows. Our very eye is taxed to follow the darting of the Swallow; and our heart leaps up as we think what delight it would be to skim the air as these little brown things do. Surely wings are another natural attribute of joy. What wonder that we find ourselves, in spite of science, thinking of these feathered meteors as a race entirely apart from moles and weazels, or from geese and turkeys, for the matter of that? To recognise singing-birds and barn-door hens as of one and the same tribe, requires deliberate reflection; and the desire for some distinction between the two classes has resulted in the restricted sense of the word "fowl" as used in modern colloquial language.[1] Neither is it in human nature to praise its victims or to think feelingly of such game-birds as it has destined for the battue and the pot; and while the familiarity begotten of the table has gone far to rob even game-birds—wild though they are—of poetry, it is not hard to recognise that one reason for the peculiar position held in our fancy by birds, as distinct from other animals, is that they alone accompany man into the cities and sing there, reminding him of lanes and woodlands in the quiet

[1] Tourguéneff in his *Gentilhomme de la Steppe* makes allusion to a Russian proverb which says: "La femme n'est pas un homme; la poule n'est pas un oiseau; un sous-lieutenant n'est pas un officier."

country-places. It is not extraordinary that our minds associate them with everything that is glad and wholesome, and that the poets of all times have been at their best when speaking of the "smallé foulés."

Of course, there have been periods when the feeling for nature and for birds became tinged with artificiality and cloyed with moral ascription: when serious Popinjays and what not—robbed of the humour Chaucer always gave them—thought, spoke, and acted like sententious prigs, and the meekness of the Dove was corrupted into human insipidity. But even at these times the birds, on the whole, fared better than the beasts and flowers. The gaiety that seems the soul of these feathered gentry, was a touchstone with which morbidity and cant could bear no contact. To attribute sordid human passions to the lightsome things that flitted and warbled in the sunlight was too palpably absurd; and even the ecstatic melancholy of the Nightingale is interpreted rather as the vague emotion of a half angelic dreamer than as the concrete passion of a fleshly thing. Indeed a reader can easily perceive that, in all the most sincere poems about birds, the charm of the subject, for the writer as well as for himself, consists in the exclusion of everything sordid. Their loves are pretty and sanctified by song; their rage is a thing to laugh at; greed is in them restrained by instinct more effectually than in

other kinds; and even their depredations are not so terrible as to make it worth the while of the human race at large to bear them a grudge.

It would be difficult to say how much of the affection we give to the birds arises in the consciousness of their weakness, their inability to harm, and even their positive dependence upon our charity at times. Their very smallness makes a claim upon our kindly regard; and the endearing terms so often employed in address to Lark and Tomtit, would be ridiculous if lavished upon an Emu or a Roc. It may be creditable or discreditable to human nature, but it is certainly consistent with it, that we should feel kindly toward such beings as are weak, both for their own protection and for our offence. In proportion as the idea of strength and awe colours our conception of a creature, the more tender feelings of affection and benevolence withdraw themselves, and the terms of our regard become more prosaic. Towards an object of reverence we feel—though to the misanthrope the statement may seem paradoxical—more as we feel towards a fellow man. One is more apt to impute to it the impulses and emotions of humanity.

Herein has the Eagle suffered much at the hands of the poets. To see the rising sun flashed back, a pulsing star, from the burnished quills of an Eagle circling almost out of sight, is to feel

dwarfed, more than if we had spoken with Shakespeare or Napoleon. But most of all has the Eagle suffered at the hands of cockney poets to whom he was not the splendid joyous creature that he seems to those who have seen him thus, but a mere brooding embodiment of the stupendous; a stock-property of the epic-writer, cradled in clouds, rocked by earthquakes, and commonly associated with the bolts of Jove. This apotheosis of the Eagle is entirely at variance with the spirit that makes the charm of bird poems in general. If it had been the fate of all birds to be misconstrued in like manner, one would scarcely have troubled to collect the passages relating to them: and there has been difficulty in deciding what measure of representation the unnatural-heroic convention was to have in this volume. Obviously there had needs be some example of it, if only that its artificiality might give their true value to the fresher conceptions. And, of course, it is undeniable that much splendid writing has been lavished upon the fictitious bird of war.

When the work was first undertaken, it was desired to include examples from the writings of foreign poets, many of whom are rich in beautiful reference to birds. But this was soon found to be utterly impracticable.

The matter now incorporated in the following pages does not represent anything like a half of the passages tentatively transcribed from English

writers; and during that preliminary process of selection quite as much again was primarily set aside.

Many of the pieces necessarily excluded from a volume of such limited dimensions are full of interest of one kind or another, and are proscribed simply by the limitation of space. The judging of a single piece has often occasioned as much trouble as would have sufficed to unearth half-a-dozen fresh ones; and it has been most difficult to decide in some instances whether quaintness were an adequate substitute for the charm that was sometimes sacrificed to eccentricity. Such, for instance, were most of the pieces in which an attempt was made to imitate in words the actual sounds formed by the songsters. Even in music such realism is inartistic, and the *Waldwehen* in *Siegfried* is seriously marred by a deliberate mimicry of the warblers which is worthy only of a toy symphony. Specimens of metrical onomatopœa might by themselves be very interesting; but not only is the endeavour to reproduce such natural sounds—and in so stiff a vehicle as specific language—both barbarous and childish; but even where it is relatively successful, the result is more curious than pleasing. Some typical examples have, however, been retained.

Then came the question whether pieces that would be new to most readers were to give place to such familiar works as "The Jackdaw of

Rheims" and "The Raven," some of which are of considerable length. But those works are undeniably representative; and it was felt that, though the volume does not profess to be exhaustive, it would be positively incomplete without such well-known examples. Moreover, if the popularity of any piece were admitted as a ground for its exclusion, there would remain the difficulty of determining what degree of culture was to furnish the criterion of familiarity. That which is novel to one mind is to another as familiar as "Who killed Cock Robin?"

After all, the purpose of the book has been to bring together in companionable form the most attractive passages in which the English poets treat of birds. Since the final arrangement of this volume was begun, there appeared a book that treats of the bird passages of a particular poet and appraises them in accordance with their scientific truth. But a poet is an idealist and not a naturalist. In the following pages he is not expected to lecture but to sing; and the collection is designed to show the position of the bird, not in nature but in poetic fancy and poetic literature. Its unique position in that fancy and that literature is due not only to the wholesome character of its natural associations, but still more to their amenability to idealisation. They owe much to their surroundings. As Emerson says—

"I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,[1]
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky."

So an endeavour has been made to bring the "river and sky" into the book along with the birds; and the text quoted from Lowell expresses what is really aimed at—to bring into the silent snuggery an echo of the minstrelsy of spring, and to make it possible at any season to find between two boards the freshness of the summer greenwood perpetually exhaled by these flowers of verse.

This being the object sought, the system of arrangement has been adapted thereto. One of the characteristic defects of anthologies is that of the extracts being ordered chronologically, or classified in accordance with a scheme scientific rather than æsthetic. The various passages, wrested from their proper context, are greatly injured through juxtaposition with others of an entirely different mood. The imagination of the reader becomes exhausted and demoralised if he tries to lend it to the varying spirit of successive and dissimilar effusions. No time is given him to suit his temper fully to the motive of a piece; and if he

[1] "The (American) song-sparrow, . . ." says Mr. Burroughs, "displays a more marked individuality in its song than any bird with which I am acquainted." "It modulates its simple ditty as softly as the lining of its own nest."—*Birds and Poets*, by John Borroughs. See pp. 118–19.

desire to suit his reading to his mood he must go poking about from one point to another, tasting here and there disconsolate until he gratifies his whim with intermittent sips. The passages have therefore been arranged in accordance with the successive phases of nature: so that parallel passages from various writers are collated for comparison and for congruity; each piece is restored to a sympathetic environment, leading naturally from theme to theme; and the reader is not required to leap from one mood to another. The index will enable him to refer to such extracts from any particular author as are distributed throughout the volume.

The Editor has been at great pains to avoid the possibility of any infringement of the rights of authors or publishers; and now feels tolerably certain that no copyright poem is included in the collection without due consent.

He wishes to thank very cordially those authors, publishers, and other holders of copyright who have most kindly given him free permission to reprint certain pieces. His thanks are tendered also to Mrs. Blackburn, and to other friends who have helped him in various ways.

F. N. P.

1

GENERAL

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Then l [illegible] s uir r lat [illegible] t fl e [illegible] J [illegible] l w
ha [illegible]

M [illegible] on

From "PARADISE LOST"

And God said, Let the waters generate
Reptile with spawn abundant, living soul:
And let fowl fly above the earth, with wings
Display'd on the open firmament of heaven.
And God created the great whales, and each
Soul living, each that crept, which plenteously
The waters generated by their kinds;
And every bird of wing after his kind,
And saw that it was good, and bless'd them, saying,
Be fruitful, multiply, and in the seas,
And lakes, and running streams, the waters fill;
And let the fowl be multiplied on the earth.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile the tepid caves, and fens, and shores,
Their brood as numerous hatch'd from the egg that, soon
Bursting with kindly rapture, forth disclosed
Their callow young; but feather'd soon and fledge
They summ'd their pens, and soaring the air sublime,
With clang despised the ground, under a cloud
In prospect: there the eagle and the stork

On cliffs and cedar-tops their eyries build:
Part loosely wing the region; part more wise,
In common, ranged in figure wedge their way,
Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
Their aëry caravan, high over seas
Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing
Easing their flight; so steers the prudent crane
Her annual voyage, borne on winds; the air
Floats as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd plumes.
From branch to branch the smaller birds with songs
Solaced the woods, and spread their painted wings
Till even; nor then the solemn nightingale
Ceased warbling, but all night tuned her soft lays:
Others, on silver lakes and rivers, bathed
Their downy breast; the swan, with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
Her state with oary feet; yet oft they quit
The dank, and, rising on stiff pennons, tower
The mid aëreal sky: others on ground
Walk'd firm; the crested cock whose clarion sounds
The silent hours, and the other whose gay train
Adorns him, colour'd with the florid hue
Of rainbows and starry eyes. The waters thus
With fish replenish'd, and the air with fowl,
Evening and morn solemnized the fifth day.

MILTON.

WALTER VON DER VOGELWEID

VOGELWEID the Minnesinger,
When he left this world of ours,
Laid his body in the cloister,
Under Wurtzburg's minster towers.

And he gave the monks his treasures,
Gave them all with this behest:
They should feed the birds at noontide
Daily on his place of rest;

Saying, "From these wandering minstrels
I have learned the art of song;
Let me now repay the lessons
They have taught so well and long."

Thus the bard of love departed:
And, fulfilling his desire,
On his tomb the birds were feasted
By the children of the choir.

Day by day, o'er tower and turret,
  In foul weather and in fair,
Day by day, in vaster numbers,
  Flocked the poets of the air.

On the tree whose heavy branches
  Overshadowed all the place,
On the pavement, on the tombstone,
  On the poet's sculptured face,

On the cross-bars of each window,
  On the lintel of each door,
They renewed the War of Wartburg,
  Which the bard had fought before.

There they sang their merry carols,
  Sang their lauds on every side;
And the name their voices uttered
  Was the name of Vogelweid.

Till at length the portly abbot
  Murmured, "Why this waste of food?
Be it changed to loaves henceforward
  For our fasting brotherhood."

Then in vain o'er tower and turret,
  From the walls and woodland nests,
When the minster bell rang noontide,
  Gathered the unwelcome guests.

Then in vain, with cries discordant,
  Clamorous round the Gothic spire,
Screamed the feathered Minnesingers
  For the children of the choir.

Time has long effaced the inscriptions
  On the cloister's funeral stones,
And tradition only tells us
  Where repose the poet's bones.

But around the vast cathedral,
  By sweet echoes multiplied,
Still the birds repeat the legend,
  And the name of Vogelweid.

LONGFELLOW.

From "THE BRIGS OF AYR"

THE simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from ev'ry bough;
The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green thorn
    bush;
The soaring lark, the perching red-breast shrill,
Or deep-ton'd plovers, gray, wild-whistling o'er the
    hill;

Shall he, nurst in the peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy independence bravely bred,
By early poverty to hardship steel'd,
And train'd to arms in stern Misfortune's field—
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes!
Or labour hard the panegyric close,
With all the venal soul of dedicating prose!
No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,
He glows with all the spirit of the Bard,
Fame, honest fame, his great, his dear reward!

BURNS.

From

"LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP"

I WAS only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE.

I.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things thou singest of divine.
There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine!"

II.

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting;
"Now wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?"
"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun."

. . . III.

The poet went out weeping,—and died abroad, bereft there—
The bird flew to his grave and died, amid a thousand wails!—
Yet, when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's!

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "TALES OF A WAYSIDE INN"

THE BIRDS OF KILLINGWORTH.

. . . .

"PLATO, anticipating the Reviewers,
From his republic banished without pity
The Poets; in this little town of yours,
You put to death, by means of a Committee,
The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,
The street-musicians of the heavenly city,
The birds, who make sweet music for us all
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul.

"The thrush that carols at the dawn of day
From the green steeples of the piny wood;
The oriole in the elm; the noisy jay,
Jargoning like a foreigner at his food,
The blue-bird balanced on some topmost spray,
Flooding with melody the neighbourhood;
Linnet and meadow-lark, and all the throng
That dwell in nests, and have the gift of song.

"You slay them all! and wherefore? for the gain
Of a scant handful more or less of wheat,
Or rye, or barley, or some other grain,
Scratched up at random by industrious feet,
Searching for worm or weevil after rain!
Or a few cherries that are not so sweet
As the songs these uninvited guests
Sing at their feast with comfortable breasts.

"Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?
Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught
The dialect they speak, where melodies
Alone are the interpreters of thought?
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught!
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven!

"Think, every morning when the sun peeps through
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,
How jubilant the happy birds renew
Their old melodious madrigals of love!
And when you think of this, remember too
'Tis always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents, from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

"Think of your woods and orchards without birds!
Of empty nests that cling to boughs and beams
As in an idiot's brain remembered words
Hang empty 'mid the cobwebs of his dream!
Will bleat of flocks or bellowing of herds
Make up for the lost music, when your teams
Drag home the stingy harvest, and no more
The feathered gleaners follow to your door?

"What! would you rather see the incessant stir
Of insects in the windrows of the hay,
And hear the locust and the grasshopper
Their melancholy hurdy-gurdies play?
Is this more pleasant to you than the whirr
Of meadow lark, and its sweet roundelay,
Or twitter of little field-fares, as you take
Your nooning in the shade of bush and brake?

"You call them thieves and pillagers; but know
They are the wingèd wardens of your farms,
Who from the cornfields drive the insidious foe,
And from your harvests keep a hundred harms;
Even the blackest of them all, the crow,
Renders good service as your man-at-arms,
Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail,
And crying havoc on the slug and snail.

"How can I teach your children gentleness,
And mercy to the weak, and reverence
For Life, which, in its weakness or excess,
Is still a gleam of God's omnipotence,
Or Death, which seeming darkness, is no less
The selfsame light, although averted hence,
When by your laws, your actions, and your speech,
You contradict the very things I teach?"

LONGFELLOW.

From "SPEECH OF HERALD"

. . . But of late
Birds are the fashion—Birds are all in all—
Their[1] modes of life are grown to be mere copies
Of the birds' habits; rising with the Lark;
Scratching and scrabbling suits and informations;
Picking and pecking upon points of law;
Brooding and hatching evidence;—in short,
It has grown to such a pitch, that names of Birds
Are given to individuals; Chærophon
Is call'd an Owl, Theagenes a Goose,
Philocles a Cock Sparrow, Midias
A Dunghill Cock.—And all the songs in vogue
Have something about Birds, Swallows, or Doves;
Or about flying, or a wish for wings.
Such is the state of things, and I must warn you,
That you may expect to see some thousands of them
Arriving here, almost immediately,
With a clamorous demand for wings and claws:
I advise you to provide yourself in time.

ARISTOPHANES,
Translated by JOHN HOOKHAM FRERE.

[1] People of earth.

SONG BY CHORUS

Blest are they,
The Birds alway,
With perfect clothing,
Fearing nothing,
Cold or sleet or summer heat.
As it chances,
As he fancies,
Each his own vagary follows,
Dwelling in the dells and hollows;
When, with eager weary strain,
The shrilly grasshoppers complain,
Parch'd upon the sultry plain,
Madden'd with the raging heat;
We secure a cool retreat,
In the shady nooks and coves,
Recesses of the sacred groves,
Many an herb, and many a berry
Serves to feast, and make us merry.

ARISTOPHANES,
Translated by John Hookham Frere.

From "THE FOOT-PATH"

THE bird I list hath never come
Within the scope of mortal ear;
My prying step would make him dumb,
And the fair tree, his shelter, scar.

Behind the hill, behind the sky,
Behind my inmost thought, he sings;
No feet avail; to hear it nigh,
The song itself must lend the wings.

Sing on, sweet bird, close hid, and raise
Those angel stairways in my brain,
That climb from these low-vaulted days
To spacious sunshines far from pain.

Sing when thou wilt, enchantment fleet,
I leave thy covert haunt untrod,
And envy Science not her feat
To make a twice-told tale of God.

LOWELL.

THE FALCON

I KNOW a falcon swift and peerless
As e'er was cradled in the pine:
No bird had ever eye so fearless,
Or wing so strong as this of mine.

The winds not better love to pilot
A cloud with molten gold o'errun,
Than him, a little burning islet,
A star above the coming sun.

For with a lark's heart he doth tower,
By a glorious upward instinct drawn;
No bee nestles deeper in the flower
Than he in the bursting rose of dawn.

No harmless dove, no bird that singeth,
Shudders to see him overhead;
The rush of his fierce swooping bringeth
To innocent hearts no thrill of dread.

Let fraud and wrong and baseness shiver,
For still between them and the sky
The falcon Truth hangs poised for ever
And marks them with his vengeful eye.

LOWELL.

From "A DRAMA OF EXILE"

Bird-Spirit.

I AM the nearest nightingale
That singeth in Eden after you;
And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail!
I sit upon a cypress-bough,
Close to the gate; and I fling my song
Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
Over the gate and after you!
And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas!
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.
And I build my song of high pure notes,
Note over note, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite;

And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
And something abides, and something floats,
In the song which I sing after you:
    Fare ye well, farewell!
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
    Expire at Eden's door!
    Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before:
    Farewell! the birds of Eden,
    Ye shall hear nevermore.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "BIRD OR BEAST?"

DID any bird come flying
  After Adam and Eve,
When the door was shut against them,
  And they sat down to grieve?

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

From "AURORA LEIGH"

But then the thrushes sang,
And shook my pulses and the elms' new leaves,-
And then I turned, and held my finger up,
And bade him mark that, howsoe'er the world
Went ill, as he related, certainly
The thrushes still sang in it.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "THE MONK AND THE BIRD"

. . . .

He, walking in a trance of selfish care,
Not once observed the beauty shed around,
The blue above, the music in the air,
The flowers upon the ground.

Till from the centre of that forest dim
Came to him such sweet singing of a bird,
As, sweet in very truth, then seemed to him
The sweetest ever heard.

That lodestar drew him onward inward still,
  Deeper than where the village children stray,
Deeper than where the woodman's glittering bill
    Lops the large boughs away—

Into a central place of glimmering shade,
  Where hardly might the straggling sunbeams pass,
Which a faint lattice-work of light had made
    Upon the long lank grass.

He did not sit, but stood and listened there,
  And to him listening the time seemed not long,
While that sweet bird above him filled the air
    With its melodious song.

He heard not, saw not, felt not aught beside,
  Through the wide worlds of pleasure and of pain,
Save the full flowing and the ample tide
    Of the celestial strain.

As though a bird of Paradise should light
  A moment on a twig of this bleak earth,
And singing songs of Paradise invite
    All hearts to holy mirth,

And then take wing to Paradise again,
  Leaving all listening spirits raised above
The toil of earth, the trouble, and the pain,
    And melted all in love :

Such hidden might, such power was in the sound :
But when it ceased sweet music to unlock,
The spell that held him sense and spirit-bound
Dissolved with a slight shock.

All things around were as they were before—
The trees, and the blue sky, and sunshine bright
Painting the pale and leaf-strewn forest-floor
With patches of faint light.

But as when music doth no longer thrill,
Light shudderings yet along the chords will run,
Or the heart vibrates tremulously still,
Although its prayer be done,

So his heart fluttered all the way he went,
Listening each moment for the vesper bell ;
For a long hour he deemed he must have spent
In that untrodden dell

And once it seemed that something new or strange
Had passed upon the flowers, the trees, the ground ;
Some slight but unintelligible change
On everything around :

Such change, where all things undisturbed remain,
As only to the eye of him appears,
Who absent long, at length returns again—
The silent work of years. . . .

RICHARD CHEVENIX TRENCH

From "THE LOST BOWER"

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-soul she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me!

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes,
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "PROMETHEIA"

"Those larks and nightingales that yonder hide,"
The Goddess answer'd as on Earth she gazed,
"Inaudible and invisible to all!
Darkling they haunt the shadows round them furl'd,
Silent amidst the universal brawl
And babble of the emancipated world.

Yet heaven is husht to hear their minstrelsy:
For these the moon and stars are not too sweet,
For those the sun himself is not too high:
And shall they have no listeners? Hearts that
beat
With base emotions find ignoble voice,
Wrath, and Unreason, and Vulgarity
Speak loud. Stupidity and Spite rejoice
In utterance unrestricted. Say, then, why
(Where Folly's fife with Envy's clarion vies)
Must these alone, the darlings of the Spring,
Whose souls are fill'd with lyric ecstacies,
Unheard, or even if heard unheeded, sing?"

ROBERT, EARL OF LYTTON.

From "ASOLANDO"

FLUTE-MUSIC.

AH, the bird-like fluting
Through the ash-tops yonder—
Bullfinch-bubblings, soft sounds suiting
What sweet thoughts, I wonder?
Fine-pearled notes that surely
Gather, dewdrop-fashion,
Deep-down in some heart which purely
Secretes globuled passion—

Passion insuppressive—
  Such is piped, for certain;
Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive
  'T is, your ash-tops curtain.

. . . . .

. . . . .

No! as you explain things,
  All's mere repetition,
Practice-pother: of all vain things
  Why waste pooh or pish on
Toilsome effort—never
  Ending, still beginning—
After what should pay endeavour
  —Right performance? winning
Weariness from you who,
  Ready to admire some
Owl's fresh hooting—Tu-whit, tu-who -
  Find stale thrush-songs tiresome.

BROWNING.

From "ODE TO RAE WILSON, ESQUIRE"

THRICE blessed, rather, is the man with whom
  The gracious prodigality of nature,
The balm, the bliss, the beauty, and the bloom,
  The bounteous providence in ev'ry feature,
  Recall the good Creator to his creature,

Making all earth a fane, all heav'n its dome!
To *his* tuned spirit the wild heather-bells
Ring Sabbath knells;
The jubilate of the soaring lark
Is chaunt of clerk;
For Choir, the thrush and the gregarious linnet;
The sod's a cushion for his pious want;
And, consecrated by the heaven within it,
The sky-blue pool a font.
Each cloud-capped mountain is a holy altar;
An organ breathes in every grove;
And the full heart's a Psalter,
Rich in deep hymns of gratitude and love!

HOOD.

From "FANCY"

. . . Thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reapèd corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
. . . . . .

Freckled nest eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest.

KEATS.

From "THE RED FISHERMAN"

SOUNDS seemed dropping from the skies,
Stifled whispers, smothered sighs,
And the breath of vernal gales,
And the voice of nightingales:
But the nightingales were mute,
Envious, when an unseen lute
Shaped the music of its chords
Into passion's thrilling words.

W. M. PRAED.

THE QUELÉTZÛ

"Now the first bird that sang on earth was the Quelétzû."—
Mexican Mythology.

Up in the air,
Like a spirit in prayer,
With the wings of a dove, and the heart of a rose,
And a bosom as white as the Zàraby snows,
When the hurricane blows!

In the light of the day,
Like a soul on its way
To the gardens of God, it was loosed from the earth;
And the song that it sang was a pæan of mirth
For the raptures of birth.

The song that it sang
Like an echo out-rang
From the cloud to the copse, and the copse to the cloud;
And the hills and the valleys responded aloud,—
And the rivers were proud.

If you think of the rush
Of the wind, and the flush
Of a morning in May when the sun is in view,
You will know what is meant by the flight from
the dew
Of the first Quelétzû.

If you think of these things
You will dote on the wings
Of the wonderful bird in its upward career;
And the legends thereof will be sweeter to hear
Than the song of a seer.

You will know what is meant
By the pinioned ascent
Of an angel of grace when its mission is done,
And the knowledge of this will be second to
none
Which the ages have spun.

For the lark in its nest
Is a minstrel at best,
And the music it makes is the mirth of a kiss
That is flung to the skies in a frenzy of bliss
On the Morning's abyss.

And the nightingale's note
Is a sob from its throat,
And the gurgle thereof is a rapture of pain;
For the roses are sad,—and the lilies complain,—
When the silence is slain.

All the larks in the world
With their feathers unfurled,
And the nightingales, too, in their tender despair,—
All the birds that we know have a sorrow to share
With the natives of air.

But the first Quelétzû,
When it sprang to the blue,
Had the heart of a rose, and the wings of a dove;
And the song that it sang to the angels above
Was the music of love.

ERIC MACKAY,
From "The Athenæum" December 3, 1892.

II.

DAWN

SPRING

Soft-littered is the new-year's lambing fold,
  And in the hollowed haystack at its side
  The shepherd lies o' nights now, wakeful-eyed
At the ewes' travailing call through the dark cold.
The young rooks cheep 'mid the thick caw o' the
    old:
  And near unpeopled stream-sides, on the ground,
  By her spring-cry the moorhen's nest is found,
Where the drained flood-lands flaunt their marigold.

Chill are the gusts to which the pastures cower,
  And chill the current where the young reeds
    stand
  As green and close as the young wheat on land:
Yet here the cuckoo and the cuckoo-flower
Plight to the heart Spring's perfect imminent hour
  Whose breath shall soothe you like your dear
    one's hand.

D. G. ROSSETTI.

From "THY GARDEN"

PURE moonlight in thy garden, sweet, to-night,
  Pure moonlight in thy garden, and the breath
Of fragrant roses. O my heart's delight!
  Wed thou with Love, but I will wed with Death!

Peace in thy garden, and the passionate song
  Of some last nightingale that sings in June!
Thy dreams with promises of love are strong,
  And all thy life is set to one sweet tune.

Love wandering round thy garden, O my sweet!
  Love walking through thy garden in the night;
Far off I feel his wings, I hear his feet,
  I see the eyes that set the world alight.

My sad heart in thy garden strays alone,
  My heart among all hearts companionless;
Between the roses and the lilies thrown,
  It finds thy garden but a wilderness.

Great quiet in thy garden, now the song
Of that last nightingale has died away!
Here jangling city chimes the silence wrong,
But in thy garden perfect rest has sway.

Dawn in thy garden, with the faintest sound,—
Uncertain, tremulous, awaking birds,—
Dawn in thy garden, and from meadows round,
The sudden lowing of expectant herds.

Light in thy garden, faint and sweet and pure;
Dim noise of birds from every bush and tree;
Rumours of song the stars may not endure;
A rain that falls and ceases suddenly.

Morn in thy garden,—bright and keen and strong!
Love calls thee, from thy garden, to awake;
Morn in thy garden, with the articulate song
Of birds that sing for love and warm light's sake.

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

From "MY BEAUTIFUL LADY"

SMALL drowsy chirping met the light,
　　And dim in lowlands far
Lone marsh-birds winged their misty flight;
What time Her aspect on my sight
　　Beamed from the morning star.

It waned into the warbling day;
　　That, rising fierce and strong,
Now looked the Western gloom away,
And kindled such a roundelay,
　　The world awoke with song.

THOMAS WOOLNER, R.A.

From "THE INDIAN SONG OF SONGS"

"AT the morn a clamour runs from tent to tent,
Like the wild geese cackling when the night is
　　spent."

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

From "SPINDRIFT"

" . . . softly, from the pines
That crowned with solemn shade the sunward crags,
A stockdove cooed; from the thick underwood
The small birds 'gan to jargle; and afar
The sea-mews shrilly babbled of the dawn . . ."

SIR NOËL PATON.

From "POEMS BY A PAINTER"

" STILL all the narrow vales lay dewy-dark;
And not a bird was stirring, save one lark
That high o'erhead, the blinding light up-winging,
Woke the clear echoes with enchanted singing:
A joyous descant, beautiful and strange,
For ever changing—sweeter every change!"

SIR NOËL PATON.

From "HAMLET"

ACT I. SCENE I.

Marcellus. It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad:
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE NONNES PREESTES TALE"

A POURE widewe, somdel stoupen in age,
Was whilom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
Beside a grove, stonding in a dale.

. . . .

A yerd she had, enclosed all about
With stickes, and a drie diche without,
In which she had a cok highte Chaunteclere,
In all the land of crowing n'as his pere.

His vois was merier than the mery orgon,
On masse daies that in the chirches gon.
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his loge,
Than is a clok, or any abbey orloge.
By nature he knew eche ascentioun
Of the equinoctial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,
Then crew he, that it might not ben amended.
His combe was redder than the fin corall,
Enbattelled, as it were a castel wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like asure were his legges and his tone;
His nailes whiter than the lily flour,
And like the burned gold was his colour. . . ."

CHAUCER.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

AND meantime the sun,
Come from Eubœan cliffs, had just begun
To light the high tips of the forest grass,
And in the thorn the blackbird singing was.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "IMELDA"

"The morn came singing
Through the green forests of the Apennines,
With all her joyous birds their free flight winging,
And steps and voices out amongst the vines."

MRS. HEMANS.

From "THE EPIC OF HADES"

With the word,
There beamed a shaft of dawn athwart the skies,
And straight the sentinel thrush within the yew
Sang out reveillé to the hosts of day,
Soldierly; and the pomp and rush of life
Began once more, and left me there alone
Amid the awaking world.

LEWIS MORRIS.

From "THE LIGHT OF ASIA"

BOOK VI.

OVER the spangled grass
Swept the swift footsteps of the lovely Light,
Turning the tears of Night to joyous gems,
Decking the earth with radiance, 'broidering
The sinking storm-clouds with a golden fringe,
Gilding the feathers of the palms, which waved
Glad salutation; darting beams of gold
Into the glades; touching with magic wand
The stream to rippled ruby; in the brake
Finding the mild eyes of the antelopes
And saying "It is day;" in nested sleep
Touching the small heads under many a wing
And whispering, "Children, praise the light of day!"
Whereat there piped anthems of all the birds,
The Köil's fluted song, the Bulbul's hymn,
The "morning, morning" of the painted thrush,
The twitter of the sunbirds starting forth
To find the honey ere the bees be out,
The grey crow's caw, the parrot's scream, the strokes

Of the green hammersmith, the myna's chirp,
The never-finished love-talk of the doves:
Yea! and so holy was the influence
Of that high Dawn which came with victory
That, far and near, in homes of men there spread
An unknown peace.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

From "THE BIRTH OF THE FLOWERS"

A VISION.

THEN wider as awoke the day,
Was seen a speck—a tiny wing
That, from the sward, drifting away,
Rose up at heaven's gate, to sing
A matin hymn melodious: Hark!
That orison!—it was the lark,
Hailing the advent of the sun.

. . . . . .

DAVID MACBETH MOIR.

From "MY BEAUTIFUL LADY"

WHAT time that noisy spot of life, the lark,
Climbs, shrill with ecstasy, the trembling air;
And "Cuckoo, Cuckoo," baffling whence it comes
Shouts the blithe egotist who cries himself;
And every hedge and coppice sings.

THOMAS WOOLNER, R.A.

From "THE PRINCESS"

. . . morn by morn the lark
Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres.

TENNYSON.

From "AURORA LEIGH"

THE music soars within the little lark,
And the lark soars.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY"

Encircled with poetic atmosphere,
As lark emballed by its own crystal song.

BROWNING.

From "POEMS BY A PAINTER"

"No thing of earthly mould was nigh,
Save one lone skylark, trancedly
Hymning up the cloudless sky,
On the wings of his own wild melody."

SIR NOÈL PATON.

From "MEMORIAL VERSES"

And with such song the hollow ways were stirred
As of a god's heart hidden in a bird.

SWINBURNE.

THE SONG OF FLOWERS AND BIRDS

WHAT is a bird but a living flower?
  A flower but the soul of some dead bird?
And what is a weed but the dying breath
    Of a perjured word?

A flower is the soul of a singing-bird,
  Its scent is the breath of an old-time song:
But a weed and a thorn spring forth each day
    For a new-done wrong.

Dead souls of song-birds, thro' the green grass
  Or deep in the midst of the golden grain,
In woodland valley, where hill-streams pass,
    We flourish again.

We flowers are the joy of the whole wide earth,
  Sweet nature's laughter and secret tears—
Whoso hearkens a bird in its spring-time mirth
    The song of a flow'r-soul hears!

WILLIAM SHARP.

From "NOW SPRING HAS CLAD THE GROVE IN GREEN"

THE waken'd lav'rock warbling springs,
An' climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blythe her dewy wings
In morning's rosy eye.

BURNS.

From "ROMEO AND JULIET"

ACT III. SCENE V.

Juliet. Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear;
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree:
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

Romeo. It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale.

. . . .

Juliet. It is, it is,—hie hence, begone, away!
It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords, and unpleasing sharps.
Some say the lark makes sweet division;
This doth not so, for she divideth us:
Some say, the lark and loathèd toad change eyes;
O, now I would they had chang'd voices too!

SHAKESPEARE.

From "CYMBELINE"

ACT II. SCENE III.

SONG.

HARK, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chalic'd flowers that lies;
And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes;
With every thing that pretty bin,
My lady sweet, arise;
Arise, arise!

SHAKESPEARE.

From "VENUS AND ADONIS"

STANZA 143.

Lo, here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
  Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
  That cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "ELORE, LO"

OLD BALLAD.

"The light upspringeth, the dew down dingeth,
The sweet lark singeth her hours of prime."

From "THE PROGRESS OF SPRING"

UP leaps the lark, gone wild to welcome her,
  About her glance the tits, and shriek the jays,
Before her skims the jubilant woodpecker,
  The linnet's bosom blushes at her gaze,
While round her brows a woodland culver flits,
  Watching her large light eyes and gracious looks,
And in her open palm a halcyon sits
  Patient—the secret splendour of the brooks.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Now past her feet the swallow circling flies,
  A clamorous cuckoo stoops to meet her hand;
Her light makes rainbows in my closing eyes,
  I hear a charm of song thro' all the land.

. . . . . .

Across my garden! and the thicket stirs,
  The fountain pulses high in summer jets,
The blackcap warbles, and the turtle purrs,
  The starling claps his tiny castanets.
Still round her forehead wheels the woodland dove,
  And scatters on her throat the sparks of dew,
The king-cup fills her footprint, and above
  Broaden the glowing isles of vernal blue.

TENNYSON.

From "SPINDRIFT"

HIGH-HEARTED minstrel of the morn,
Who singest all unseen
Up the steep eastern sheen,
Towards the gates of pearl enraptured borne.
O for those wings of thine!
O for those tones divine,
That circling upwards float
From thine inspirèd throat,
Like viewless incense round a sacred shrine!
So faint, so sweet, so crystal clear,
The listening heart must weep, or break to hear.

Or, O swart bird, that thou,
Who from the topmost twinkling aspen bough,
In strains that seem to well
Through gurgling oinomel,
Pourest thy passionate love-song all abroad;
And yet couldst not unload,
Till midnight didst thou try,
That throbbing breast of its sweet agony!

O passionate bird! that thou
Wouldst be my tutor now,
And to my yearning heart and brain
Reveal the secret of thy magic strain!

SIR NOËL PATON.

From "EPITHALAMION"

WAKE now, my love, awake; for it is time;
The rosy morne long since left Tithons bed,
All ready to her silver coche to clyme;
And Phœbus gins to show his glorious hed.
Hark! how the cheerfull birds do chaunt theyr laies
And carroll of Loves praise.
The merry larke hir mattins sings aloft;
The thrush replyes; the mavis descant playes:
The ouzell shrills; the ruddock warbles soft;
So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,
To this dayes merriment.
Ah! my deere love: why doe ye sleepe thus long,
When meeter were that ye should now awake,
T'awayt the comming of your ioyous make,

And hearken to the birds love-learned song,
The deawy leaves among!
For they of ioy and pleasance to you sing,
That all the woods them answer, and theyr eccho
ring.

SPENSER.

From "MORNING"

WAKEN, drowsy slumberer, waken!
Deep the moon her draught has taken
Of the babbling rivulet sheen,
Far beyond the Ochil green.
From her gauzy veil on high
Trills the laverock's melody;
Round and round, from glen and grove,
Pour a thousand hymns to love;
Harps the quail amid the clover,
O'er the moon-fern whews the plover;
Bat has hid, and heath-cock crowed,
Courser neighed, and cattle lowed,
Kid and lamb their lair forsaken;—
Waken, drowsy slumberer, waken!

HOGG.

THE BIRD'S MESSAGE

I.

Ye little birds that sit and sing
  Amidst the shady valleys,
And see how Phillis sweetly walks
  Within her garden alleys;
Go, pretty birds, about her bower;
Sing, pretty birds, she may not lower;
Ah, me! methinks I see her frown!
  Ye pretty wantons, warble.

Go, tell her, through your chirping bills,
  As you by me are bidden,
To her is only known my love,
  Which from the world is hidden.
Go, pretty birds, and tell her so;
See that your notes strain not too low:
For still, methinks, I see her frown '
  Ye pretty wantons, warble.

Go, tune your voices' harmony,
  And sing, I am her lover;
Strain loud and sweet, that every note
  With sweet content may move her.

And she that hath the sweetest voice,
Tell her I will not change my choice :
Yet still, methinks, I see her frown !
   Ye pretty wantons, warble.

Oh, fly ! make haste ! see, see, she falls
   Into a pretty slumber.
Sing round about her rosy bed,
   That waking she may wonder.
Say to her, 'tis her lover true
That sendeth love to you, to you ;
And when you hear her kind reply,
   Return with pleasant warblings.

II.

Pack, clouds away, and welcome day,
   With night we banish sorrow ;
Sweet air blow soft, mount larks aloft
   To give my Love good-morrow !
Wings from the wind to please her mind,
   Notes from the lark I'll borrow ;
Bird, prune thy wing, nightingale sing,
   To give my Love good-morrow ;
         To give my Love good-morrow
         Notes from them both I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, Robin-Redbreast,
  Sing birds in every furrow;
And from each hill let music shrill
  Give my fair Love good-morrow!
Blackbird and thrush in every bush,
  Stare, linnet, and cock-sparrow!
You pretty elves, among yourselves,
  Sing my fair Love good-morrow;
    To give my Love good-morrow,
    Sing birds in every furrow!

THOMAS HEYWOOD.

From "THE STORY OF RIMINI"

ANON the sweet birds, like a sudden throng
Of happy children, ring their tangled song
From out the greener trees; and then a cloud
Of cawing rooks breaks o'er them, gathering loud
Like savages at ships; and then again
Nothing is heard but their own stately train,
Or ring-dove that repeats his pensive plea,
Or startled gull up-screaming toward the sea.

LEIGH HUNT.

From "A DARK MONTH"

XX.

LOUDER seems each bird
In the brightening branches heard
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

SWINBURNE.

From "THE VISION OF DELIGHT"

How is't each bough a several music yields?
The lusty throstle, early nightingale,
Accord in tune, though vary in their tale;
The chirping swallow call'd forth by the sun,
And crested lark doth his division run?
The yellow bees the air with murmur fill,
The finches carol, and the turtles bill?
Whose power is this? what god?

BEN JONSON.

From

"BENEDICITE AND OTHER POEMS"

"O ALL ye Birds of various wing,
Bless ye the Lord in joyful lays;
Whether in some dim forest-maze,
Unseen yourselves, your voices ring:
Or up through azure heights ye spring,
Bearing aloft melodious praise:
O all ye Birds of various wing,
Bless ye the Lord in joyful lays.

Whether in garden-nooks ye sing,
Or warble by the public ways:
If but a simple trill ye raise,
Or but a cheery chirp ye bring:
O all ye Birds of various wing,
Bless ye the Lord in joyful lays."

RICHARD WILTON.

From "PARADISE LOST"

. . . tune His praise.
Join voices, all ye living souls: ye birds,
That singing up to heaven-gate ascend,
Bear on your wings and in your notes His praise.

MILTON.

From "EASTER WINGS"

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poor:

With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy Victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

GEORGE HERBERT.

From "THE EXCURSION"

BOOK II.

THERE crows the cock, single in his domain:
The small birds find in spring no thicket there
To shroud them; only from the neighbouring vales
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill-tops,
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

WORDSWORTH.

From "PIPPA PASSES"

THE year's at the spring
And day's at the morn:
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

BROWNING.

From "ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD"

Oh, I was cheerful as the lark, whose lay
Thrills through the ether, and awakes the day!

SOUTHEY.

"SONNETS"

XXIX.

. . . .

Haply I think on thee,—and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

SHAKESPEARE.

From

"ODE ON THE PLEASURE ARISING FROM VICISSITUDE"

Now the golden morn aloft
  Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
With vermeil cheek and whisper soft
  She wooes the tardy spring:
Till April starts, and calls around
The sleeping fragrance from the ground:
And lightly o'er the living scene
Scatters his freshest, tenderest green.

New-born flocks, in rustic dance,
  Frisking ply their feeble feet;
Forgetful of their wintry trance
  The birds his presence greet:
But chief, the sky-lark warbles high
His trembling, thrilling ecstasy;
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light

Rise, my soul! on wings of fire,
  Rise the rapt'rous choir among;
Hark! 'tis nature strikes the lyre,
  And leads the gen'ral song:

Warm let the lyric transport flow,
Warm as the ray that bids it glow;
And animates the vernal grove
With health, with harmony, and love.

GRAY

A GREEN CORNFIELD

"And singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest.'

THE earth was green, the sky was blue:
I saw and heard one sunny morn
A skylark hang between the two,
A singing speck above the corn;

A stage below, in gay accord,
White butterflies danced on the wing,
And still the singing skylark soared
And silent sank and soared to sing.

The cornfield stretched a tender green
To right and left beside my walks;
I knew he had a nest unseen
Somewhere among the million stalks:

And as I paused to hear his song
  While swift the sunny moments slid,
Perhaps his mate sat listening long,
  And listened longer than I did.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

III.

SPRING — MORNING

From "IN MEMORIAM"

WHEN rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush;
Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March.

TENNYSON.

From "SONGS AND SONNETS"

THEN lovers walk and tell their tale,
Both of their bliss, and of their bale;
And how they serve, and how they do,
And how their lady loves them too.
Then tune the birds their harmony;
Then flock the fowl in company;
Then everything doth pleasure find
In that, that comforts all their kind.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

From "MORGANA"

AND blithe are the birds in the Barleywood,
  Where merle and mavis and woodlark sing,
And the cushat croodles high unseen,
And the cuckoo calls from the brachen green,
  And sweet are the smells that the wind-wafts
      bring,
    When the morning airs are keen

WALTER C. SMITH.

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

I

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!



the Wild Duck

II.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

BROWNING.

A SPRING CAROL

I.

BLITHE friend! blithe throstle! Is it thou,
Whom I at last again hear sing,
Perched on thy old accustomed bough,
Poet-prophet of the Spring?

Yes! Singing as thou oft hast sung,
I can see thee there among
The clustered branches of my leafless oak;
Where, thy plumage gray as it,
Thou mightst unsuspected sit,
Didst thou not thyself betray
With thy penetrating lay,
Swelling thy mottled breast at each triumphant stroke.
Wherefore warble half concealed,
When thy notes are shaft and shield,
And no hand that lives would slay
Singer of such a roundelay?
Telling of thy presence thus,
Be nor coy nor timorous!
Sing loud! Sing long!
And let thy song
Usurp the air 'twixt earth and sky:
Let it soar and sink and rally,
Ripple low along the valley,
Break against the fir-trees high,
Ofttimes pausing, never dying,
While we lean where fancy bids,
Listening, with half-closèd lids,
Unto the self-same chant, most sweet, most satisfying.

. . . . . .
. . .
. . . . . .

III.

Wherefore dost thou sing, and sing?
Is it for sheer joy of singing?
Is it to hasten lagging Spring,
Or greet the Lenten lilies through turf and tuft upspringing?
Dost thou sing to earth or sky?
Never comes but one reply:
Carol faint, carol high,
Ringing, ringing, ringing!
Are those iterated trills
For the down-looking daffodils,
That have strained and split their sheath,
And are listening underneath?
Or but music's prompting note,
Whereunto the lambs may skip?
Haply dost thou swell thy throat,
Only to show thy craftsmanship?
Wouldst thou pipe if none should hearken?
If the sky should droop and darken,
And, as came the hills more close,
Moody March to wooing Spring
Sudden turned a mouth morose,—
Unheeded wouldst, unheeding, sing?
What is it rules thy singing season?
Instinct, that diviner reason,

To which the thirst to know seemeth a sort of treason?
If it be,
Enough for me,
And any motive for thy music I
Will not ask thee to impart,
Letting my head play traitor to my heart,
Too deeply questioning why.
Sing for nothing, if thou wilt,
Or, if thou for aught must sing,
Sing unto thy anxious spouse,
Sitting somewhere 'mong the boughs,
In the nest that thou hast built,
Underneath her close-furled wing
Future carols fostering.
Sing, because it is thy bent;
Sing, to heighten thy content!
Sing, for secret none can guess;
Sing, for very uselessness!
Sing for love of love and pleasure,
Unborn joy, unfound treasure,
Rapture no words can reach, yearning no thoughts can measure!

ALFRED AUSTIN.

From "THE SPANISH GYPSY"

PABLO (*sings*).

IT was in the prime
Of the sweet Spring-time.
    In the linnet's throat
    Trembled the love-note,
And the love-stirred air
Thrilled the blossoms there.
    Little shadows danced
    Each a tiny elf,
Happy in large light
    And the thinnest self.

It was but a minute
    In a far-off Spring,
    But each gentle thing,
Sweetly-wooing linnet,
Soft-thrilled hawthorn tree,
    Happy shadowy elf
    With the thinnest self,
    Live still on in me.
O the sweet, sweet prime
Of the past Spring-time!

GEORGE ELIOT.

From "SUDDEN FINE WEATHER"

WITH song the bosoms of the birds run o'er,
The cuckoo calls, the swallow's at the door,
And apple-trees at noon, with bees alive,
Burn with the golden chorus of the hive.
Now all these sweets, these sounds, this vernal blaze,
Is but one joy, express'd a thousand ways:
And honey from the flowers, and song from birds,
Are from the poet's pen his overflowing words.

LEIGH HUNT.

SPRING

THE soote[1] season that bud and bloom forth brings
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale;
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her make[2] hath told her tale;
Summer is come, for every spray now springs.
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;

[1] Sweet. [2] Mate.

The fishes float with new repairèd scale ;
The adder all her slough away she slings ;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies small ;
The busy bee her honey now she mings ;[1]
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs ![2]

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

From "THE BOOKE OF THE DUTCHESSE"

Me thought thus, that it was May,
And in the dawning there I lay.
Me met[3] thus in my bed all naked,
And lookèd forth, for I was waked,
With smalè foulès a great hepe,
That had afraied[4] me out of my slepe,
Through noise and sweetnesse of hir song,
And as me mette, they sat among
Upon my chamber roofe without,
Upon the tyles over all about ;
And everiche song[5] in his wise
The most solemne[6] servise

[1] Mixes. [2] Grows anew. [3] Dreamt.
[4] Startled. [5] Each one sang. [6] Joyful.

By note, that ever man I trow
Had heard; for some of hem sung low,
Some high, and all of one accord.
To tell shortly at o word,
Was never heard so sweet a steven,[1]
But it had be a thing of Heven.
So merry a sowne, so sweet entunes,
That certes for the towne of Tewnes
I n'olde but I had heard hem sing;
For all my chamber gan to ring,
Through singing of hir ermony,
For instrument nor melody
Was no where heard yet halfe so swete,
Nor of accord halfe so mete,
For there was none of hem that fained
To sing; for ech of hem him pained
To find out many crafty notes;
They ne sparèd nat hir throtes. . . .

CHAUCER.

[1] Sound

From "THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF"

. . . .

And up I rose three houres after twelfe,
About the springing of the day;
And on I put my geare and mine array,
And to a pleasaunt grove I gan passe,
Long er the bright Sunne up risen was;

In which were okes great, streight as a line,
Under the which the grasse so fresh of hew,
Was newly sprong, and an eight foot or nine
Every tree well fro his fellow grew,
With branches brode, laden with leves new,
That sprongen out ayen the sunne-shene,
Some very red, and some a glad light grene.

Which, as me thought, was right a pleasant sight;
And eke the briddes songe for to here,
Would have rejoiced any earthly wight,
And I that couth not yet, in no manere,
Heare the nightingale of all the yeare,
Ful busily herkened with herte and eare,
If I her voice perceive coud any where.

And as I stood and cast aside mine eie,
I was ware of the fairest medler tree,
That ever yet in all my life I sie,
As full of blossomes as it might be;
Therein a goldfinch leaping pretile
Fro bough to bough; and, as him list, he eet
Here and there of buds and floures sweet.

And to the herber side was joyning
This faire tree, of which I have you told;
And at the last the brid began to sing,
Whan he had eaten what he eat wold,
So passing sweetly, that by manifold
It was more pleasaunt than I could devise.
And whan his song was ended in this wise,

The nightingale with so merry a note
Answered him, that all the wood rong
So sodainly, that, as it were a sote,[1]
I stood astonied; so was I with the song
Thorow ravished, that till late and long,
I ne wist in what place I was, ne where;
And ayen, me thought, she song ever by mine ere.

CHAUCERIAN PERIOD.

[1] A fool.

From "THE CUCKOW AND THE NIGHTINGALE"

AND anone as I the day aspide,
No lenger would I in my bed abide,
But unto a wood that was fast by,
I went forth alone boldely,
And held the way downe by a brooke side,

. . . . . .

There sat I downe among the faire flours,
And saw the birds trip out of hir bours,
There as they rested hem all the night;
They were so joyfull of the dayes light,
They began of May for to done honours.

They coud that service all by rote,
There was many a lovely note!
Some song loud as they had plained,
And some in other manner voice yfained,
And some all out with the full throte.

They proyned hem, and maden hem right gay,
And daunceden and lepten on the spray;
And evermore two and two in fere,
Right so as they had chosen hem to-yere
In Feverere upon saint Valentine's day.

And the river that I sate upon,
It made such a noise as it ron,
Accordaunt with the birdes armony,
Me thought it was the best melody
That might ben yheard of any mon.

And for delite, I wote never how,
I fell in such a slomber and a swow,[1]—
Nat all asleepe, ne fully waking,—
And in that swow me thought I hearde sing
The sorry bird, the leud cuckow,

And that was on a tree right fast by.
But who was then evill apaid but I?
"Now God" (quod I) "that died on the crois,
Yeve sorrow on thee, and on thy leud vois!
Full little joy have I now of thy cry."

And as I with the cuckow thus gan chide,
I heard, in the next bush beside,
A nightingale so lustely sing,
That her clere voice she made ring
Thurgh all the greene wood wide.

"Ah, good nightingale," (quod I then,)
"A little hast thou ben too long hen;
For here hath ben the leud cuckow,
And songen songs rather than hast thou:
I pray to God evill fire her bren!"

[1] Swoon.

But now I wol you tell a wonder thing :—
As long as I lay in that swouning,
Me thought I wist what the birds ment,
And what they said, and what was hir entent,
And of hir speech I had good knowing. . . .

CHAUCERIAN PERIOD.

From "CHAUCER'S DREAM"

And whan the night past and ronne
Was, and the new day begonne,
The yong morrow with rayes red,
Which from the Sunne over all con spred,
Atempered clere was and faire,
And made a time of wholsome aire,
Befell a wonder case and strange,
Among the people, and gan change
Soone the word and every woo,
Unto a joy, and some to two:
A bird all fedred blew and greene,
With bright rayes like gold betweene,
As small thred over every joynt,
All full of colour strange and coint,
Uncouth and wonderfull to sight,
Upon the queen's herse con light,
And song full low and softely,

Three songs in her harmony,
Unletted of every wight,
Till at the last an aged knight,
Which seemed a man in great thought,
Like as he set all thing at nought,
With visage and eyen all forwept,
And pale, as man long unslept,
By the herses as he stood,
With hasty hondling of his hood,
Unto a prince that by him past,
Made the bridde somewhat agast.
Wherefore she rose and left her song,
And depart from us among,
And spread her wings for to passe
By the place he entred was,
And in his hast, shortly to tell,
Him hurt, that backeward downe he fell,
From a window richly peint,
With lives of many divers seint,
And bet his wings and bled fast,
And of the hurt thus died and past;
And lay there well an houre and more.
Till at last, of briddes a score
Come and sembled at the place
Where the window broken was,
And made swiche waimentacioun,
That pity was to heare the soun,
And the warbles of their throtes,

And the complaint of their notes,
Which from joy cleane was reversed;
And of them one the glas soone persed,
And in his beke, of colours nine,
An herbe he brought flourelesse, all grene,
Full of small leaves, and plaine,
Swart and long with many a veine.
And where his fellow lay thus dede,
This hearbe down laid by his hede,
And dressed it full softily,
And hong his head and stood thereby.
Which hearb in lesse than half an houre,
Gan over all knit, and after floure
Full out; and wexe ripe the seed.
And right as one another feed
Would, in his beake he tooke the graine,
And in his fellowe's beake certaine
It put, and thus within the third
Up stood, and pruned him the bird,
Which dead had be in all our sight;
And both togither forth their flight
Tooke, singing, from us, and their leve;
Was none disturb hem would ne greve.
And, whan they parted were and gone
Th' abbesse the seeds soone echone
Gadred had . . .

CHAUCERIAN PERIOD.

From "THE COURT OF LOVE"

On May day, whan the larke began to rise,
To matens went the lusty nightingale,
Within a temple shapen hauthorn-wise,
He might not slepe in all the nightertale,
But "*Domine labia,*" gan he cry and gale,
"My lippes open, Lord of Love I crye,
And let my mouth thy praising now bewry."

The egle sang "*Venite* bodies all,
And let us joy to love that is our health."
And to the desk anon they gan to fall,
And who came late he preesed in by stealth:
Than sayd the faucon, our own hertes wealth,
"*Domine Dominus noster* I wote,
Ye be the God that done us brenne thus hote."

"*Cœli enarrant,*" said the popingay,
"Your might is told in Heaven and firmament."
And than came in the gold-finch freshe and gay,
And said this psalme with hertily glad intent,
"*Domini est terra;*" this latin intent,
The God of Love hath yerth in governaunce:
And than the wren gan skippen and to daunce.

"*Jube Domne* O Lord of Love, I pray
Commaund me well this lesson for to rede;
This legende is of all that woulden dey
Martires for love, God yet the souls spede!
And to thee Venus sing we, out of drede,
By influence of all thy vertue great,
Beseching thee to keepe us in our heat."

The second lesson robin redebrest sang,
"Haile to the god and goddes of our lay!"
And to the lectorne amorously he sprong:—
"Haile now," (quod eke) "O fresh season of May,
Our moneth glad that singen on the spray!
Haile to the floures, rede, and white, and blewe,
Which by their vertue maketh our lust new!"

The third lesson the turtil dove toke up,
And thereat lough the mavis in a scorne:
He said, "O God, as mote I dine or suppe,
This folish dove will give us al an horne!
There ben right here a thousand better borne,
To rede this lesson, which as well as he,
And eke as hote, can love in all degree."

The turtil dove said, "Welcom, welcom May,
Gladsom and light to lovers that ben trew!
I thanke thee Lord of Love that doth purvey
For me to rede this lesson al of dewe;

For in good soth of corage I pursue
To serve my make till death us must depart :'
And than " *Tu autem* " sang he all apart.

" *Te deum amoris* " sang the throstel cocke:
Tuball himself, the first musician,
With key of armony coude not onlocke.
So swete tewne as that the throstel can :
" The Lord of Love we praysen," (quod he) than.
And so done al the foules great and lite,
" Honour we May, in fals lovers dispite."

" *Dominus regnavit*," said the pecocke there,
The Lord of Love that mighty prince, ywis,
He is received here and every where :
Now Jubilate sing ·— 'What meaneth this ?"
Said then the linet ; " welcome, Lord of blisse ! "
Out sterte the owle with " *Benedicite*,"
"What meaneth all this mery fare" (quod he).

" *Laudate*," sang the larke with voice ful shril ;
And eke the kight " *O admirabile* ,
This quere wil thorow mine ears pers and thril ;
But what? welcome this May season," (quod he)
" And honour to the Lord of Love mote be,
That hath this feste so solempne and so hie :"
" *Amen*," said al, and so said eke the pie.

And forth the cuckow gan procede anon,
With "*Benedictus*" thanking God in hast,
That in this May would visite them echon,
And gladden them all while the feast shal last:
And therewithal a-laughter out he brast,
"I thank it God that I should end the song,
And all the service which hath ben so long."

Thus sang they all the service of the feste,
And that was done right erly to my dome;
And forth goeth all the court both most and leste,
To fetch the floures fresh, and braunch and blome;
And namely, hauthorn brought both page and grome.
With fresh garlants party blew and white,
And than rejoysen in their great delite.

CHAUCERIAN PERIOD

THE MERLE AND THE NIGHTINGALE

I.

In May, as that Aurora did upspring,
With crystal een chasing the cloudès sable,
I heard a Merle[1] with merry notès sing
A song of love, with voice right comfortable,
Against the orient beamès, amiable,
Upon a blissful branch of laurel green;
This was her sentence, sweet and delectable,
"A lusty life in Lovè's service been."

II.

Under this branch ran down a river bright,
Of balmy liquor, crystalline of hue,
Against the heavenly azure skyès light,
Where did, upon the other side, pursue
A Nightingale, with sugar'd notès new,
Whose angel feathers as the peacock shone
This was her song, and of a sentence true,
"All love is lost but upon God alone."

[1] Blackbird.

III.

With notès glad, and glorious harmony,
This joyful Merle, saluted she the day,
While rung the woodès of her melody,
Saying, "Awake, ye lovers, O, this May;
Lo, fresh Flora has flourish'd every spray,
As nature has her taught, the noble queen,
The fields be clothed in a new array:
A lusty life in Lovè's service been!"

IV.

Ne'er sweeter noise was heard with living man,
Than made this merry gentle Nightingale;
Her sound went with the river as it ran,
Out through the fresh and flourish'd lusty vale;
"O Merle!" quoth she, "O fool! stint of thy tale,
For in thy song good sentence is there none,
For both are lost, the time and the travail,
Of every love but upon God alone."

V.

"Cease," quoth the Merle, "thy preaching, Nightingale:
Shall folk their youth spend into holiness?
Of young saintis, grow old fiendis, *but*[1] fable;
Fie hypocrite, in yearis' tenderness

[1] Without.

Against the law of kind thou goest express,
That crooked age makes one with youth serene,
Whom nature of conditions made diverse:
A lusty life in Lovè's service been."

VI.

The Nightingale said, "Fool, remember thee,
That both in youth and age, and every hour,
The love of God most dear to man should be;
That him, of nought, wrought like his own figour,
And died himself, from death him to succor;
Oh, whether was shewèd there true love or none?
He is most true and steadfast paramour,
All love is lost but upon him alone."

VII.

The Merle said, "Why put God so much beauty
In ladies, with such womanly having,
But if he would that they should lovèd be?
To love eke nature gave them inclining,
And he of nature that worker was and king,
Would nothing useless put, nor let be seen,
Into his creature of his own making;
A lusty life in Lovè's service been."

VIII

The Nightingale said, "Not to that behoof
Put God such beauty in a lady's face,
That she should have the thank therefor or love,
But He, the worker, that put in her such grace;
Of beauty, bounty, riches, time, or space,
And every goodness that be to come or gone,
The thanks redound to him in every place:
All love is lost but upon God alone."

IX

"O Nightingale! it were a story nice,
That love should not depend on charity,
And, if that virtue contrar' be to vice,
Then love must be a virtue, as thinks me;
For, aye, to love envy must contrar' be:
God bade eke love thy neighbours from the spleen,[1]
And who than ladies sweeter neighbours be?
A lusty life in Lovè's service been!"

The Nightingale said, "Bird, why does thou rave?
Man may take in his lady such delight,
Him to forget that her such virtue gave,
And for his heaven receive her colour white:

[1] Heart

Her golden tressèd hairis redornite,[1]
Like to Apollo's beamis though they shone,
Should not him blind from love that is perfite;
All love is lost but upon God alone."

XI.

The Merle said, "Love is cause of honour aye,
Love makes cowards manhood to purchase,
Love makes knightis hardy at essay,
Love makes wretches full of largèness,
Love makes sweir[2] folk full of business,
Love makes sluggards fresh and well beseen,[3]
Love changes vice in virtuous nobleness;
A lusty life in Lovè's service been."

XII.

The Nightingale said, "True is the contrary;
Such useless love it blindis men so far,
Into their minds it maketh them to vary;
In false vain-glory they so drunken are,
Their wit is went, of woe they are not 'ware,
Till that all worship away be from them gone,
Fame, goods, and strength; wherefore well say I
dare,
All love is lost but upon God alone."

[1] Encircled. [2] Sloth. [3] Of good appearance.

XIII.

Then said the Merle, "Mine error I confess:
This useless love is all but vanity;
Blind ignorance me gave such hardiness,
To argue so against the verity;
Wherefore I counsel every man that he
With love not in the fiendis net be tone,[1]
But love the love that did for his love die,
All love is lost but upon God alone."

XIV.

Then sang they both with voices loud and clear.
The Merle sang, "Man, love God that has thee wrought."
The Nightingale sang, "Man, love the Lord most dear,
That thee and all this world made of nought."
The Merle said, "Love him that thy love has sought
From heaven to earth, and here took flesh and bone"
The Nightingale sang, "And with his death thee bought;
All love is lost but upon him alone."

[1] Taken.

XV.

Then flew these birds over the boughis sheen,
Singing of love among the leavès small;
Whose eidant plead yet made my thoughtis green,
Both sleeping, waking, in rest and in travail;
Me to recomfort most it does avail,
Again for love, when love I can find none,
To think how sung this Merle and Nightingale;
"All love is lost but upon God alone."

DUNBAR.

From "THE GOLDEN TARGE: A MAY-DAY DREAM"

BRIGHT as the starn[1] of day begouth[2] to shine,
When gone to bed were Vesper and Lucine,
I rase,[3] and by a rosere[4] did me rest.
Up sprang the golden candle matutine,[5]
With clear depurit[6] beamès crystalline,
Gladding the merry fowlès in their nest:
Or[7] Phœbus was in purpur cape revest,[8]
Up rose the lark, the heavens' minstrel fine,
In May, intill a morrow[9] mirthfulest.

[1] Star of day, sun. [2] Began. [3] Rose.
[4] Rose-bush. [5] Of morning. [6] Purified.
[7] Befoie. [8] Reclothed. [9] In a morning.

Full angel-like thir[1] birdès sang their hours
Within their curtains green into their bowers,
Apparelled white and red with bloomès sweet:
Enamelled was the field with all colours;
The pearly droppis shook in silver showers,
While all in balm did branch and leavès fleet:[2]
To part frae Phœbus did Aurora greet;[3]
Her crystal tears I saw hing on the flowers,
Whilk[4] he, for luve, all drank up with his heat.

For mirth of May, with skippès and with hops,
The birdès sang upon the tender crops
With curious notes, as Venus' chapel-clerks:
The roses young, new spreading of their knops,[5]
Were powdered bricht with heavenly beryl drops,
Through beamès red, burning as ruby sparks:
The skyès rang for shouting of the larks:
The purpur heaven, o'er-scaled in silver slops,
O'er-gilt the treès, branches, leaves, and barks.

DUNBAR.

[1] These. [2] Flow. [3] Weep. [4] Which. [5] Buds.

From "A SCOTCH MAY MORNING IN 1513"

PROLOGUE TO BOOK XII.

MAIST amiable waxes the emerant meads.
Swannès soughès[1] throughout the risp and reeds,
Ower all their lowès[2] and the floodès gray,
Seekand by kind a place where they suld lay:
Phœbus' red fowl[3] his coral crest gan steir,[4]
Oft strecking forth his heckle,[5] crawand clear,
Amid the wortès[6] and the rootès gent,[7]
Pickand his meat in alleys where he went;
His wives, Toppa and Pertelote, him by,
As bird all time that hantès[8] bigamy:
The painted poune,[9] pacand with plumès gim,[10]
Cast up his tail, a proud pleasand wheel-rim,
Y-shrowdit in his feathram[11] bricht and sheen,
Shapand the print of Argus' hundred eyne:
Amang the brownès[12] of the olive twests[13]
Seir[14] smallè fowlès workand crafty nests

[1] Breathe or whistle [2] Lochs. [3] The cock.
[4] Stir, move. [5] Stretching forth his spur.
[6] Plants. [7] Neat. [8] Practises.
[9] Peacock. [10] Smart. [11] Feathering.
[12] Branches. [13] Twigs. [14] Many.

Endlang the hedges thick, and on rank aiks,[1]
Ilk bird rejoicing with their mirthful makes.[2]
In corners and clear fenesters[3] of glass
Full busily Arachne[4] weavand was,
To knit her nettès and her webbès sly,
Therewith to catch the midge and little fly.
So dusty powder upstours[5] in every street,
While Corby[6] gaspit for the fervent heat.

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

Dame Nature's minstrels, on that other part, . . .
With merry notès mirthfully forth brest, . . .
The cushat croods and pirkès on the rise;[7]
The starling changes divers stevens[8] nice;
The sparrow chirmès in the wallès clift:
Goldspink and lintwhite fordinnand the lift;
The cuckoo galès,[9] and so whitters the quail;
While rivers reirdit,[10] shaws, and every vale;
And tender twistès trimmilt[11] on the trees,
For birdès sang and bimming[12] of the bees.
In warbles dulce of heavenly armonies,
The larkès, loud releshand[13] in the skies,

[1] Oaks. [2] Mates. [3] Windows.
[4] The spider. [5] Clouds up. [6] The crow.
[7] The wood-pigeon coos and twitters on the branch.
[8] Sounds, modulations. [9] Calls.
[10] Clamoured. [11] Twigs trembled. [12] Humming.
[13] Singing freely.

Lovès their Liege,[1] with tonès curious;
Baith to Dame Nature and the fresh Venus,
Rendering high laudès in their observance;
Whaes sugured throatès made glad heartès dance;
And all small fowlès singès on the spray:—
"Welcome, the Lord of Light, and Lamp of Day;
Welcome, foster of tender herbès green;
Welcome, quickener of flourished flowèrs sheen;
Welcome, support of every root and vein;
Welcome, comfort of allkind fruit and grain,
Welcome, the birdès bield upon the breir,[2]
Welcome, maister and ruler of the year;
Welcome, weelfare of husbands[3] at the ploughs;
Welcome, repairer of woodès, trees, and boughs;
Welcome, depainter of the bloomit meads;
Welcome, the life of everything that spreads;
Welcome, storer of all kind bestial;[4]
Welcome be thy bricht beamès, gladding all;
Welcome, celestial mirror, and espy,
Atteaching[5] all that hauntès[6] sluggardy."

And with this word, in chamber where I lay,
The ninth morrow of freshè temperate May,
On foot I sprent[7]

GAWAIN DOUGLAS.

[1] Lord. [2] Shelter on the brier. [3] Husbandmen.
[4] Cattle. [5] Reproving. [6] Practise.
[7] Sprang.

"LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING"

I HEARD a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths,
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played;
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If I these thoughts may not prevent,
  If such be of my creed the plan,
Have I not reason to lament
  What man has made of man?

WORDSWORTH.

TO A WATERFOWL

  WHITHER, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
  Thy solitary way?

  Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
  Thy figure floats along.

  Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
  On the chafed ocean-side?

  There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
  Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

IV.

SPRING — NESTING

THE CUCKOO

AMID the sound of picks to-day,
And shovels rasping on the rail,
A sweet voice came from far away,
From out a gladly greening vale

My mate look'd up in some surprise;
I half stopp'd humming idle rhyme:
Then said, the moisture in my eyes,
"The cuckoo, Jack, for the first time."

How sweet he sang! I could have stood
For hours, and heard that simple strain;
An early gladness throng'd my blood,
And brought my boyhood back again.

The primrose took a deeper hue,
The dewy grass a greener look;
The violet wore a deeper blue,
A lighter music led the brook.

Each thing to its own depth was stirr'd,
  Leaf, flower, and heaven's moving cloud,
As still he piped, that stranger bird,
  His mellow May-song clear and loud.

Would I could see him as he sings,
  When, as if thought and act were one,
He came, the gray on neck and wings
  Turn'd white against the happy sun

I knew his well known sober flight,
  That boyhood made so dear to me,
And, blessings on him! he stopp'd in sight,
  And sang where I could hear and see.

Two simple notes were all he sang,
  And yet my manhood fled away,
Dear God! The earth is always young,
  And I am young with it to-day.

A wondrous realm of early joy
  Grew all around as I became
Among my mates a bearded boy,
  That could have wept but for the shame.

For all my purer life, now dead,
  Rose up, fair-fashioned, at the call
Of that gray bird, whose voice had shed
  The charm of boyhood over all.

O early hopes and sweet spring tears!
  That heart has never known its prime
That stands without a tear and hears
  The cuckoo's voice for the first time.

ALEXANDER ANDERSON
("Surfaceman").

From "INFANCY—A FRAGMENT"

THE linnet chirp'd upon the furze as well,
To my young sense, as sings the nightingale.
Without was paradise—because within
Was a keen relish, without taint of sin

CRABBE.

"TO THE CUCKOO"

O BLITHE new-comer! I have heard,
  I hear thee and rejoice:
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
  Or but a wandering voice?

While I am lying on the grass,
Thy loud note smites my ear!
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near!

I hear thee babbling to the vale
Of sunshine and of flowers;
And unto me thou bring'st a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery.

The same whom in my school-boy days
I listened to; that cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green:
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen!

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, fairy place;
That is fit home for thee!

WORDSWORTH.

From "THE SHEALING SONG"

WHEN the cry of the cuckoo is heard from the craig,
Then the milk on the kye will be flowing,
And we'll leave low Glen Spean, and up to Loch Treig,
And his bonny green shealings be going.

On the birk comes the leaf at the glad cuckoo cry,
And green braird to upland and hollow,
Comes bloom to the hillside, and warmth to the sky,
And to the still lochan the swallow.

J. C. SHAIRP.

From "KING LEAR"

ACT I. SCENE IV.

Fool. . . . . .

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE WARBLING OF BLACKBIRDS

When I hear the waters fretting,
When I see the chestnut letting
All her lovely blossom falter down, I think, "Alas the day!"
Once with magical sweet singing,
Blackbirds set the woodland ringing,
That awakes no more while April hours wear themselves away.

In our hearts fair hope lay smiling,
Sweet as air and all beguiling;
And there hung a mist of bluebells on the slope and down the dell;

And we talked of joy and splendour
That the years unborn would render,
And the blackbirds helped us with the story, for they knew it well.

Piping, fluting, "Bees are humming,
April's here, and summer's coming,
Don't forget us when you walk, a man with men, in pride and joy;
Think on us in alleys shady,
When you step a graceful lady,
For no fairer day have we to hope for, little girl and boy.

"Laugh and play, O lisping waters,
Lull our downy sons and daughters;
Come, O wind, and rock their leafy cradle in thy wanderings coy,
When they wake we'll end the measure
With a wild sweet cry of pleasure,
And a 'Hey down derry, let's be merry! little girl and boy!'"

JEAN INGELOW.

From "THE EPIC OF HADES"

The broad West wind breathes softly, and the air
Is tremulous with the lark, and thro' the woods
The soft full-throated thrushes all day long
Flood the green dells with joy, and thro' the dry
Brown fields the sower strides, sowing his seed,
And all is life and song.

LEWIS MORRIS.

From "AN APRIL SONG"

And let me hear the mavis pour
His rich full-throated lay,
Unbosoming his redundant store
Of gladness to the day:
And let me ban all moody thoughts
To Limbo far away,
When all the air is quick with notes
Of happy life to-day.
Shine, shine, O April bright,
And drive dull care away!

JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

From "LOCKSLEY HALL"

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

TENNYSON.

From "THE ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE"

The birdes, that han left hir song
While they han suffred cold full strong
In wethers grille and derke to sight,
Ben in May, for the Sunne bright,
So glad, that they shew in singing
That in hir heart is such liking,

That they mote singen and ben light.
Than doth the nightingale her might
To maken noyse, and singen blithe:
Than is blisfull many a sithe,
The chelaundre, and the popingaye:
Than younge folke entenden ay,
For to ben gay and amorous;
The time is then so savorous.
  Harde is his heart that loveth nought
In May, whan all this mirth is wrought,
Whan he may on these braunches here
The smalle birdes singen clere
Hir blisfull, swete song piteous. . . .

CHAUCERIAN PERIOD.

From "VALENTINE'S DAY"

OH! I wish I were a tiny browny bird from out the south,
  Settled among the alder-holts, and twittering by the stream;
I would put my tiny tail down, and put up my tiny mouth,
  And sing my tiny life away in one melodious dream.

I would sing about the blossoms, and the sunshine and the sky,
And the tiny wife I mean to have in such a cosy nest;
And if some one came and shot me dead, why then I could but die,
With my tiny life and tiny song just ended at their best.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

FRAGMENT

CHASTE are their instincts, faithful is their fire,
No foreign beauty tempts to false desire;
The snow-white vesture, and the glittering crown,
The simple plumage, or the glossy down
Prompt not their loves—the patriot bird pursues
His well-acquainted tints, and kindred hues.
Hence through their tribes no mixed polluted flame,
No monster breed to mark the groves with shame;
But the chaste blackbird, to its partner true,
Thinks black alone is beauty's favourite hue.
The nightingale, with mutual passion blest,
Sings to its mate, and nightly charms the rest.
While the dark owl to court its partner flies,
And owns its offspring in their yellow eyes.

-- --(?)

THE BIRDS

HE.

WHERE thou dwellest, in what grove,
Tell me, fair one, tell me, love;
Where thou thy charming nest dost build,
O thou pride of every field!

SHE.

Yonder stands a lonely tree:
There I live and mourn for thee.
Morning drinks my silent tear,
And evening winds my sorrow bear.

HE.

O thou summer's harmony,
I have lived and mourned for thee;
Each day I moan along the wood,
And night hath heard my sorrows loud.

SHE.

Dost thou truly long for me?
And am I thus sweet to thee?
Sorrow now is at an end,
O my lover and my friend!

Come! on wings of joy we'll fly
To where my bower is hung on high;
Come, and make thy calm retreat
Among green leaves and blossoms sweet.

BLAKE.

THE WREN'S NEST

I TOOK the wren's nest;—
Heaven forgive me!
Its merry architects so small
Had scarcely finished their wee hall,
That, empty still and neat and fair
Hung idly in the summer air.
The mossy walls, the dainty door,
Where Love should enter and explore,
And Love sit carolling outside,
And Love within chirp multiplied;—
I took the wren's nest.—
Heaven forgive me!

How many hours of happy pains
Through early frosts and April rains,
How many songs at eve and morn
O'er springing grass and greening corn,

What labours hard through sun and shade
Before the pretty house was made!
One little minute, only one,
And she'll fly back, and find it—gone!
    I took the wren's nest
    Bird, forgive me!

Thou and thy mate, sans let, sans fear,
Ye have before you all the year,
And every wood holds nooks for you,
In which to sing and build and woo;
One piteous cry of birdish pain—
And ye'll begin your life again,
Forgetting quite the lost, lost home
In many a busy home to come—
But I?—Your wee house keep I must
Until it crumble into dust
    I took the wren's nest
    God forgive me!

THE AUTHOR OF
"JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN"

From "THE FOUR BRIDGES"

. . . .

To yonder copse by moonlight I did go,
  In luxury of mischief, half afraid,
To steal the great owl's brood, her downy snow,
  Her screaming imps to seize, the while she preyed
With yellow, cruel eyes, whose radiant glare
Fell with their mother rage, I might not dare.

Panting I lay till her great fanning wings
  Troubled the dreams of rock-doves, slumbering
    nigh;
And she and her fierce mate, like evil things,
  Skimmed the dusk fields; then rising, with a cry
Of fear, joy, triumph, darted on my prey,
And tore it from the nest and fled away.

But afterward, belated in the wood,
  I saw her moping on the rifled tree,
And my heart smote me for her, while I stood
  Awakened from my careless reverie;
So white she looked, with moonlight round her shed,
So mother-like she drooped and hung her head.

JEAN INGELOW.

From "GERTRUDE OF WYOMING"

AND nought within the grove was heard or seen
But stock-doves plaining through its gloom profound,
Or winglet of the fairy humming-bird,
Like atoms of the rainbow fluttering round.

CAMPBELL.

From "WITH WALKER IN NICARAGUA"

THE trees shook hands high over head,
And bow'd and intertwined across
The narrow way, while leaves and moss
And luscious fruit, gold-hued and red,
Through all the canopy of green,
Let not one sunshaft shoot between.

Birds hung and swung, green-robed and red,
Or droop'd in curved lines dreamily,
Rainbows reversed, from tree to tree,
Or sang low-hanging overhead—

Sang low, as if they sang and slept,
Sang faint, like some far waterfall,
And took no note of us at all,
Though nuts that in the way were spread
Did crash and crackle as we stept.

. . . . . .
. . . . .

The long days through from blossom'd trees
There came the sweet song of sweet bees,
With chorus-tones of cockatoo
That slid his beak along the bough,
And walk'd and talk'd and hung and swung,
In crown of gold and coat of blue,
The wisest fool that ever sung,
Or had a crown, or had a tongue.

JOAQUIN MILLER.

From "THE VOYAGE OF COLUMBUS"

THERE sits the bird that speaks! there, quivering, rise
Wings that reflect the glow of evening-skies!
Half bird, half fly, the fairy king of flowers
Reigns there, and revels thro' the fragrant hours;
Gem full of life, and joy, and song divine,
Soon in the virgin's graceful ear to shine.

ROGERS.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

Each brilliant bird that wings the air is seen ;—
Gay, sparkling loories, such as gleam between
The crimson blossoms of the coral tree
In the warm isles of India's sunny sea ;
Mecca's blue sacred pigeon, and the thrush
Of Hindostan, whose holy warblings gush
At evening from the tall pagoda's top ;—
Those golden birds [1] that, in the spice time, drop
About the gardens, drunk with that sweet food
Whose scent hath lured them o'er the summer
flood ,
And those that under Araby's soft sun
Build their high nests of budding cinnamon ;—
In short, all rare and beauteous things that fly
Through the pure element here calmly lie
Sleeping in light, like the green birds [2] that dwell
In Eden's radiant fields of asphodel !

MOORE.

[1] Birds of Paradise
[2] "The spirits of the martyrs will be lodged in the crops of green birds."—*Gibbon*.

WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME

Warble me now for joy of lilac-time, (returning in reminiscence,)
Sort me, O tongue and lips, for Nature's sake, souvenirs of earliest summer,
Gather the welcome signs, (as children with pebbles or stringing shells,)
Put in April and May, the hylas croaking in the ponds, the elastic air,
Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,
Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget the high-hole flashing his golden wings,
The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the vapour,
Shimmer of waters with fish in them, the cerulean above,
All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks running,
The maple woods, the crisp February days and the sugar-making,
The robin where he hops, bright-eyed, brown breasted,
With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,

Or flitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, building the nest of his mate,
The melted snow of March, the willow sending forth its yellow-green sprouts,
For spring-time is here! the summer is here! and what is this in it and from it?
Thou, soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know not what;
Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away!
O if one could but fly like a bird!
O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!
To glide with thee, O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er the waters;
Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky, the grass, the morning drops of dew,
The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-shaped leaves,
Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called innocence,
Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for their atmosphere,
To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,
A warble for joy of lilac-time, returning in reminiscence.

WALT WHITMAN.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

And many a green necked bird sung to his mate
Within the slim-leaved, thorny pomegranate,
That flung its unstrung rubies on the grass.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE TITLARK'S NEST

A PARABLE.

"Introite, nam et huc dei sunt." -*Apud Gellium.*

I.

Where o'er his azure birthplace still the smile
  Of sweet Apollo kindles golden hours,
High on the white peak of a glittering isle
  A ruin'd fane within a wild vine's bowers
Muffled its marble-pillar'd peristyle;
  As under curls, that clasp in frolic showers
A young queen's brow, her antique diadem's
Stern grandeur hides its immemorial gems.

II.

The place was solitary, and the fane
  Deserted save that where, in saucy scorn
Of desolation's impotent disdain,
  The revelling leaves and buds and bunches born
From that wild vine along a roofless lane
  Of mouldering marble columns roam'd, one morn
A titlark, by past grandeur unopprest,
Had boldly built her inconspicuous nest.

III.

And there where girt by priests and devotees
  A god once gazed upon the suppliant throng,
Wild foliage waved by every wandering breeze
  Now shelter'd one small bird; to whose lone song,
Companion'd by no choral minstrelsies,
  An agèd shepherd listen'd all day long.
Unlearn'd the listener and untaught the lay,
But blithe were both in their instinctive way.

IV.

Thither once came a traveller who had read
  Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, and had all
The terms of architecture in his head,
  Apophyge, and plinth, and astragal.

He, from below, had in its leafy bed
  Spied out the carcass of an antique wall,
Keen as, from heaven, the hovering condor spies
Where, in the pampas hid, a dead horse lies.

V.

"Pelasgian? Nought doth old Pausanias say
  About this ruin, and I find no plan
Or note of it in learnèd Caylus; nay,
  I doubt not it was miss'd by Winckelmann.
The prize is mine. No joke, this hot noon-day,
  To climb yon hill! But Science leads the van
Of Enterprise; and now's the chance to shame
The English Elgin's cheaply-purchased fame.

VI.

"Ho, you there, yonder in the bramble-bush!"
  The tired explorer to the shepherd cried,
"A drachma for thy guidance, friend!" But "Hush!"
  The grey-hair'd herdsman of the hills replied.
Then, pointing upward to the leafage lush
  That rippled round the ruin'd fane, with pride
He added, "Hark, where yonder leaves are swinging,
The god's voice from his sanctuary singing!"

VII.

The traveller laugh'd. "'Tis a *curruca* small,
The *Orphea*, I surmise, whose note we hear.
Her nest is haply in yon temple wall.
An earlier songstress she, and sings more clear,
Than her small northern cousin whom we call
Atricapilla Sylvia. But I fear,
My worthy friend, we must not deem divine
Each vagrant voice that issues from a shrine."

VIII.

"Yet," said the old man, with a pensive smile,
"I heard my mother tell when I was young
(And she, Sir, was a daughter of this isle)
How everything that's here had once a tongue,
In the old times. Myself, too, many a while
Have heard the streamlets singing many a song,
And, tho' their language was unknown to me,
The reeds were moved by it, as I could see.

IX.

"Sir, when I was a boy I pastured here
My father's goats which now, Sir, are mine own.
For he is underground this many a year,
But he had lived his life, and Heaven hath shown

Much goodness to us, and my children dear
  Are all grown up; and, musing here alone,
Oft have I wonder'd 'Could this temple break
Long silence, in what language would it speak?'

X.

"Full sure was I that if it spoke to me,
  Whate'er its language, I should understand.
Then, I was young: and now, tho' old I be,
  When sweet in heaven above the silent land
That voice I hear, my soul feels glad and free,
  And I am fain to bless the god's command,
With welcome prompt responding to the voice
He sends from heaven to bid my heart rejoice.

XI.

"Ah, not in vain its message have I heard!
  And, Sir, tho' it may be, as you aver,
The voice comes only from a little bird,
  Whose name, indeed, I never heard of, Sir,
And tho' I doubt not aught by you averr'd,
  For you, Sir, seem a learnèd traveller,
Yet still the temple that contains the song
A temple is, and doth to God belong.

XII.

"And haply to the little bird I hear
He may have said 'I am myself too high
For this poor man. Speak to him thou, speak clear,
And tell him, little bird, that he may lie
On consecrated ground and have no fear,
But listen to thy messages, and try
To understand.' And I have understood,
For when I listen, Sir, it does me good."

ROBERT, EARL OF LYTTON.

From "THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY"

Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear?
—The secret they sang to Ulysses
When, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret,
I hear and I know.

BROWNING.

From "ATHENS"

BUT the darkness of the twilight noon is cloven
Still with shrill sweet moan of many a nightingale
Closer clustering there they make sweet noise together,
Where the fearful gods look gentler than our fear,
And the grove thronged through with birds of holiest feather
Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of dark things near

SWINBURNE.

From "ATHENS" (1865)

BUT loud o'er Grecian ruins still the lark
Doth, as of old, Hyperion's glory hail,
And from Hymettus, in the moonlight, hark
The exuberant nightingale!

ROBERT, EARL OF LYTTON.

IN TUSCANY

Dost thou remember, friend of vanish'd days,
  How in the golden land of love and song,
We met in April in the crowded ways
  Of that fair city where the soul is strong,
Aye! strong as fate, for good or evil praise?
And how the lord whom all the world obeys,—
  The lord of light to whom the stars belong,—
  Illumed the track that led thee through the throng?
Dost thou remember, in the wooded dale,
  Beyond the town of Dante the Divine,
  How all the air was flooded as with wine?
And how the lark, to drown the nightingale,
Peal'd out sweet notes? I live to tell the tale.
  But thou? Oblivion signs thee with a sign!

ERIC MACKAY.

From "MAY SONG"

BIRDS on their boughs, of every sort,
Send forth their notes and make great mirth,
On banks that bloom; on every brae,
On every brae, on every brae;
And fare and fly o'er field and firth,
Through gladness of this lusty May,
Through gladness of this lusty May.

ANONYMOUS.

From "MAY-DAY"

AH! well I mind the calendar,
Faithful through a thousand years,
Of the painted race of flowers,
Exact to days, exact to hours,
Counted on the spacious dial
Yon broidered zodiac girds.
I know the trusty almanac
Of the punctual coming-back,
On their due days, of the birds.

I marked them yestermorn,
A flock of finches darting
Beneath the crystal arch,
Piping, as they flew, a march,—
Belike the one they used in parting
Last year from yon oak or larch ;
Dusky sparrows in a crowd,
Diving, darting northward free,
Suddenly betook them all,
Every one to his hole in the wall,
Or to his niche in the apple-tree.
I greet with joy the choral trains
Fresh from palms and Cuba's canes.
Best gems of Nature's cabinet,
With dews of tropic morning wet,
Beloved of children, bards, and Spring,
O birds, your perfect virtues bring,
Your song, your forms, your rhythmic flight,
Your manners for the heart's delight,
Nestle in hedge, or barn, or roof,
Here weave your chamber weather-proof,
Forgive our harms, and condescend
To man, as to a lubber friend,
And, generous, teach his awkward race
Courage, and probity, and grace !

EMERSON.

From "PROTHALAMION"

"Ye gentle Birdes! the worlds faire ornament.
And heavens glorie, whom this happie hower
Doth leade unto your lovers blissfull bower,
Joy may you have, and gentle hearts content
Of your loves couplement!
And let faire Venus, that is Queen of love,
With her heart-quelling Sonne upon you smile,
Whose smile, they say, hath vertue to remove
All loves dislike, and friendships faultie guile
For ever to assoile.
Let endlesse Peace your steadfast hearts accord,
And blessed Plenty wait upon you[r] bord;
And let your bed with pleasures chast abound,
That fruitfull issue may to you afford,
Which may your foes confound,
And make your joyes redound
Upon your Brydale day, which is not long:
Sweete Themmes! run softlie, till I end my song."

SPENSER.

SPRING

SPRING, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo.

The palm and may make country houses gay,
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo.

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo.
Spring, the sweet Spring!

THOMAS NASH.

THE SONG OF BIRDS

WHAT bird so sings, yet so does wail?
O 'tis the ravished Nightingale!
Jug-jug! jug-jug! tereu! she cries,
And still her woes at midnight rise.

Brave prick-song! who is't now we hear?
None but the Lark so shrill and clear;
At Heaven's gate she claps her wings,
The morn not waking till she sings.

Hark, hark! with what a pretty throat
Poor Robin Redbreast tunes his note;
Hark how the jolly Cuckoos sing,
  Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring!
  Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring!

JOHN LYLY.

From "THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM"

STANZA XV.

As it fell upon a day,
In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade
Which a grove of myrtles made,
Beasts did leap, and birds did sing,
Trees did grow, and plants did spring;
Everything did banish moan,
Save the nightingale alone:
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,
Lean'd her breast up-till a thorn,
And there sung the dolefull'st ditty,
That to hear it was great pity·
"Fie, fie, fie," now would she cry;
"Teru, Teru!" by and by;
That to hear her so complain,
Scarce I could from tears refrain;
For her griefs, so lively shown,
Made me think upon mine own.
Ah, thought I, thou mourn'st in vain!
None take pity on thy pain:

Senseless trees, they cannot hear thee;
Ruthless bears, they will not cheer thee.
King Pandion, he is dead;
All thy friends are lapp'd in lead;
All thy fellow-birds do sing,
Careless of thy sorrowing.
Even so, poor bird, like thee,
None alive will pity me.

SHAKESPEARE.

From

"A DEFENCE OF ENGLISH SPRING"

AND hark! behind baptismal shower,
Whose drops, new-poured on leaf and flower,
Unto their infant faces cling,
The cuckoo, sponsor of the Spring,
Breaks in, and strives, with loud acclaim,
To christen it with his own name.
Now he begins, he will not cease,
Nor leave the woodlands any peace,
That have to listen all day long
To him reciting his one song.
And oft you may, when all is still,
And night lies smooth on vale and hill,

Hear him call "Cuckoo!" in his dream,
Still haunted by the egoist theme.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Yes, Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo, still!
Do you not feel an impulse thrill
Your vernal blood to do the same,
And, boylike, shout him back his name?
– But though he loudest, longest sings,
Music is shook from myriad wings.
Hear you the lark advancing now,
Through seas of air, with rippling prow?
They say that from the poet's tears
Spring sweetest songs for unseen ears;
And from its moist and lowly bed,
The lark mounts up aloft to shed,
In heavenly fields beyond our view,
Music still drenched with earthly dew.
The robin, that in winter cheers
With his lone voice our lonelier ears,
Though warbling still on neighbouring bough,
Sings all unheard, unnoticed now.
Chatter the jays, the starlings flute,
There's not a single throat that's mute.
From tree to tree the finches flit,
Nor once their carols intermit.
The willow-warbler mounts, then drops,
And in his silvery solo stops

Just as it bubbles to the brim,
To hark if any answer him.
High on a bare conspicuous spray,
That none may doubt who chants the lay,
Proud of his undisputed skill
To breast whatever note he will,
The thrush runs revelling all along
The spacious gamut of his song;
Varies, inverts, repeats the strain,
Then sings it different again.
The blackbird, less expert than he,
Coaxes and scolds alternately;
Then, with a sudden scream and rush,
Is off into another bush,
Feigning to fear for life and limb,
Though none have interfered with him.
But listen! ne'er on urban bough
Was perched the note you caught just now.
Hush! move a little down the lane;
When we have passed he'll start again.
There! Did you ever hear a strain
Of such apotheosized pain,
Such sadness almost sung to bliss,
Blending of woe and joy like this?
Yes, he descants all day, despite
The name he borrows from the night.
Though then perchance the wails increase,
When doth true anguish ever cease?

He is the poet-bird that sings
Through joy, through sorrow, through all things.
'Tis only we that do not hark
Until our own bright days grow dark.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

From "THE ASSEMBLY OF FOULES"

A GARDEIN saw I full of blosomed bowis,
Upon a river in a grene mede,
There as sweetnesse evermore inough is,
With floures white, blewe, yelowe, and rede,
And cold welle streames, nothing dede,
That swommen full of smale fishes light,
With finnes rede, and scales silver bright.

On every bough the birdes heard I sing,
With voice of angell in hir armonie,
That busied hem hir birdes forth to bring,
The little pretty conies to hir plav gan hie,
And further all about I gan espie
The dredeful roe, the buck, the hart, and hind,
Squirrels, and beastes small of gentle kind.

Of instruments of stringes in accorde
Heard I so play a ravishing swetnesse,



Ihe ele f e th H r m

C H A [illegible]

That, God, that maker is of all and Lorde,
Ne heard never better, as I gesse,
Therewith a wind, unneth[1] it might be lesse,
Made in the leaves grene a noise soft
Accordant to the foules song on loft.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

For this was on sainct Valentine's day,
Whan every foule cometh to chese hir make,
Of every kind that men thinke may,
And that so huge a noise gan they make,
That earth, sea, and tree, and every lake,
So full was that unneth there was space
For me to stand, so full was all the place.

And right as Alain, in the Plaint of Kinde,
Deviseth Nature of such araie and face,
In suche aray men might her there finde
This noble empresse full of all grace,
Bad every foule take hir owne place,
As they were wont alway, fro yere to yere,
On sainct Valentine's day, standen there.

That is to say, the foules of ravine
Were highest set, and than the foules smale,
That eaten as that nature would encline,
As worme or thing, of which I tell no tale,

[1] Scarcely

But water foule sat lowest in the dale,
And foules that liveth by seed sat on the grene,
And that so many, that wonder was to sene.

There might men the royall egle find,
That with his sharpe looke perseth the Son,
And other egles of a lower kind,
Of which that clerkes well devisen con;
There was the tyrant with his fethers don,
And grene, I mean the goshauke that doth pine
To birdes, for his outragious ravine.

The gentle faucon, that with his fete distreineth
The king's hand, the hardy sperhauke eke,
The quailes foe, the merlion that peineth
Himself full oft the larke for to seke,
There was the dove, with her eyen meke,
The jelous swan, ayenst his deth that singeth,
The oul eke, that of deth the bode bringeth.

The crane, the geaunt, with his trompes soune,
The thief the chough, and the chattring pie,
The scorning jaye, the eles foe the heroune,
The false lapwing, full of trecherie,
The stare, that the counsaile can bewrie,
The tame ruddocke, and the coward kite,
The cocke, that horiloge is of thorpes lite.

The sparowe Venus' son, and the nightingale
That clepeth[1] forth the fresh leaves new,
The swalowe, murdrer of the bees smale
That maken honie of floures fresh of hew,
The wedded turtell, with his herte true,
The pecocke, with his angel fethers bright,
The fesaunt, scorner of the cocke by night.

The waker gose, the cuckowe ever unkind,
The popingey, full of delicasy,
The drake, stroier of his owne kind,
The storke, wreker of adoutry,
The hote cormeraunt, full of glotony,
The ravin and the crowe, with her voice of care,
The throstell olde, and the frostie feldefare.

What should I say? of foules of every kind,
That in this world have fethers and stature,
Men might in that place assembled find,
Before that noble goddesse of Nature,
And eche of them did his busie cure,
Benignely to chese, or for to take
By her accorde, his formell or his make.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

And whan this werk brought was to an end,
To every foule Nature yave his make,

[1] Calleth.

By even accord, and on hir way they wend,
And Lord the blisse and joy that they make,
For ech of hem gan other in his wings take,
And with hir neckes ech gan other winde,
Thanking alway the noble goddess of kinde.

But first were chosen foules for to sing,
As yere by yere was alway hir usaunce,
To sing a roundel at hir departing,
To do Nature honour and pleasaunce,
The note I trow maked was in Fraunce,
The words were such as ye may here find
The next verse as I now have in mind.
Qui bien ayme tard oublye.

"Now welcome summer, with thy sunnes soft,
That hast this winter weathers overshake,
Saint Valentine, thou art full high on loft,
Which drivest away the long nights blake;
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake,
Well have they cause for to gladen oft,
Sens each of hem recovered hath his make,
Full blisful may they sing whan they awake." . .

CHAUCER.

PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED

A FABLE.

I SHALL not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
If birds confabulate or no;
'Tis clear, that they were always able
To hold discourse, at least in fable;
And e'en the child, who knows no better
Than to interpret by the letter,
A story of a cock and bull,
Must have a most uncommon skull.
  It chanc'd then on a winter's day,
But warm, and bright, and calm as May,
The birds, conceiving a design
To forestall sweet St. Valentine,
In many an orchard, copse, and grove,
Assembled on affairs of love,
And with much twitter and much chatter,
Began to agitate the matter.
At length a Bullfinch, who could boast
More years and wisdom than the most,
Entreated, op'ning wide his beak,
A moment's liberty to speak;

And, silence publicly enjoin'd,
Deliver'd briefly thus his mind:
My friends! be cautious how ye treat
The subject upon which we meet;
I fear we shall have winter yet.
A Finch, whose tongue knew no control,
With golden wing, and satin poll,
A last year's bird, who ne'er had tried
What marriage means, thus pert replied:
Methinks the gentleman, quoth she,
Opposite in the apple-tree,
By his good will would keep us single
Till yonder heav'n and earth shall mingle,
Or (which is likelier to befall)
Till death exterminate us all.
I marry without more ado,
My dear Dick Redcap, what say you?
Dick heard, and tweedling, ogling, bridling,
Turning short round, strutting and sideling,
Attested, glad, his approbation
Of an immediate conjugation.
Their sentiments so well express'd
Influenc'd mightily the rest,
All pair'd, and each pair built a nest.
But though the birds were thus in haste,
The leaves came on not quite so fast,
And Destiny, that sometimes bears
An aspect stern on man's affairs,

Not altogether smil'd on theirs.
The wind, of late breath'd gently forth,
Now shifted east, and east by north;
Bare trees and shrubs but ill, you know,
Could shelter them from rain or snow,
Stepping into their nests, they paddled,
Themselves were chill'd, their eggs were addled;
Soon ev'ry father bird and mother
Grew quarrelsome, and peck'd each other,
Parted without the least regret,
Except that they had ever met,
And learn'd in future to be wiser,
Than to neglect a good adviser.

MORAI.

Misses! the tale that I relate
This lesson seems to carry—
Choose not alone a proper mate,
But proper time to marry.

COWPER.

WINTER RAIN

WEAVE a bower of love
For birds to meet each other,
Weave a canopy above
Nest and egg and mother.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

THE TWA CORBIES

OLD BALLAD.

As I was walking a' my lane,
I heard twa corbies makin' their mane;
The t'ane unto the t'ither did say,
"Whaur sall we gang dine this day?"

"Down beside yon new-fa'en birk,
I wot there lies a new-slain knight;
Nae livin' kens that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and his lady fair.

"His hound is to the huntin' gane,
His hawk to fetch the wildfowl hame,
His lady's ta'en anither mate,
Sae we may mak' our dinner sweet

"Ye'll sit on his white hause bane,
And I'll pyke out his bonny blue een,
Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair,
We'll theek our nest when it grows bare.

"Mony a ane for him mak's mane,
But nane sall ken whaur he is gane;
O'er his white banes when they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair."

From "UNDER THE WILLOWS"

'T is he!
My oriole, my glance of summer fire,
Is come at last, and, ever on the watch,
Twitches the pack-thread I had lightly wound
About the bough to help his housekeeping,—
Twitches and scouts by turns, blessing his luck,
Yet fearing me who laid it in his way,
Nor, more than wiser we in our affairs,
Divines the providence that hides and helps.
Heave, ho! Heave, ho! he whistles as the twine

Slackens its hold; *once more, now!* and a flash
Lightens across the sunlight to the elm
Where his mate dangles at her cup of felt.
Nor all his booty is the thread; he trails
My loosened thought with it along the air,
And I must follow, would I ever find
The inward rhyme to all this wealth of life.

LOWELL.

From "CHARLES AVISON"

. . . 'T was a bird
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize, deterred
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake: gain
Such prize my blackcap must by might and main—
The cloth shred, still a-flutter from its nail
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told the tale
To thee,—no townsman but born orchard-thief,—
That here—surpassing moss-tuft, beard from sheaf
Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout,
All proper country-pillage—here, no doubt,
Was just the scrap to steal should line thy nest
Superbly? Off he flew, his bill possessed
The booty sure to set his wife's each wing
Greenly a-quiver How they climb and cling,

Hang parrot-wise to bough, these blackcaps! Strange
Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch
Should stray so far to forage: at a pinch,
Was not the fine wool's self within his range
—Filchings on every fence? But no: the need
Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled
By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,
New-suited to what scheming finch would breed
In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

BROWNING

From "BROTHERS, AND A SERMON"

Coo, dove, to thy married mate—
She has two warm eggs in her nest:
Tell her the hours are few to wait
Ere life shall dawn on their rest;
And thy young shall peck at the shells, elate
With a dream of her brooding breast.

Coo, dove, for she counts the hours,
Her fair wings ache for flight:
By day the apple has grown in the flowers,
And the moon has grown by night,
And the white drift settled from hawthorn bowers,
Yet they will not seek the light.

Coo, dove; but what of the sky?
  And what if the storm-wind swell,
And the reeling branch come down from on high
  To the grass where daisies dwell,
And the brood belovèd should with them lie
  Or ever they break the shell?

Coo, dove; and yet black clouds lower,
  Like fate, on the far-off sea:
Thunder and wind they bear to thy bower,
  As on wings of destiny.
Ah, what if they break in an evil hour,
  As they broke over mine and me? . . .

JEAN INGELOW.

From "RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP COUNTRY"

THE white domestic pigeon pairs secure,
Nay, does mere duty by bestowing egg
In authorised compartment, warm and safe,
Boarding about, and gilded spire above,
Hoisted on pole, to dogs' and cats' despair!
But I have spied a veriest trap of twigs
On tree-top, every straw a thievery,

Where the wild dove—despite the fowler's snare,
The sportman's shot, the urchin's stone,—
crooned gay,
And solely gave her heart to what she hatched,
Nor minded a malignant world below.

BROWNING.

From "GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON"

WISELIER would fools that carp bestow a thought
How birds build nests; at outside, roughly
wrought,
Twig knots with twig, loam plasters up each chink,
Leaving the inmate rudely lodged—you think?
Peep but inside! That spacious rude-and-rough
Covers a domicile where downy fluff
Embeds the ease-deserving architect,
Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect
'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the teeth
Of wind and weather, guard what swung beneath
From upset only, but contrived himself
A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek.
Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek
How nature prompts each volatile! Thus—pelf
Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging, power

Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace
Robuster heart-beats: rock, not tree nor tower,
Contents the building eagle: rook shoves close
To brother rook on branch, while crow morose
Apart keeps balance perched on topmost bough.
No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow:
Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the bower—
His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet
The lacking instance when at loss to get
A feathered parallel to what we find
The secret motor of some mighty mind
That worked such wonders—all for vanity!
Worked them to haply figure in the eye
Of intimates as first of—doers' kind?
Actors', that work in earnest sportively,
Paid by a sourish smile. How says the Sage?
Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
Whereon to pose and posture and engage
The priceless female simper.

BROWNING.

From "THE EXCURSION"

BOOK V.

"YES!" said the Solitary, with a smile
That seemed to break from an expanding heart,
"The untutored bird may found, and so construct,
And with such soft materials line, her nest,
Fixed in the centre of a prickly brake,
That the thorns wound her not; they only guard.
Powers, not unjustly likened to those gifts
Of happy instinct which the woodland bird
Shares with her species, Nature's grace sometimes
Upon the individual doth confer,
Among the higher creatures born and trained,
To use of reason."

WORDSWORTH.

From "A ROSEBUD BY MY EARLY WALK"

WITHIN the bush, her covert nest,
A little linnet fondly prest;
The dew sat chilly on her breast
Sae early in the morning.

She soon shall see her tender brood,
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedew'd,
Awake the early morning.

BURNS.

From "THE STAR'S MONUMENT"

. . .

Ah! little bird (he thought), most patient bird,
Breasting thy speckled eggs the long day through,
By so much as my reason is preferred
Above thine instinct, I my work would do
Better than thou dost thine. Thou hast not stirred
This hour thy wing. Ah! russet bird, I sue
For a like patience to wear through these hours—
Bird on thy nest among the apple-flowers. . . .

JEAN INGELOW.

From "MACBETH"

ACT I. SCENE VI.

Banquo. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his lov'd mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant cradle;
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd,
The air is delicate.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "MISCONCEPTIONS"

I.

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
  Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
  Fit for her nest and her treasure.

Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet
hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

BROWNING.

From "HYPERION"

. . . shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might.

KEATS.

From

"A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES"

NEST EGGS.

Birds all the sunny day
  Flutter and quarrel
Here in the arbour-like
  Tent of the laurel.

Here in the fork
  The brown nest is seated;
Four little blue eggs
  The mother keeps heated.

While we stand watching her,
  Staring like gabies,
Safe in each egg are the
  Bird's little babies.

Soon the frail eggs they shall
  Chip, and upspringing
Make all the April woods
  Merry with singing.

Younger than we are,
  O children, and frailer,
Soon in blue air they'll be
  Singer and sailer.

We, so much older,
  Taller and stronger,
We shall look down on the
  Birdies no longer.

They shall go flying
  With musical speeches
High overhead in the
  Tops of the beeches.

In spite of our wisdom
  And sensible talking,
We on our feet must go
  Plodding and walking.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

From "SA'DI IN THE GARDEN"

I.

ALL in a Garden fair I sat and spied
The Tulips dancing, dancing side by side,
With scarlet turbans dressed;
All in a Garden green at night I heard
The gladsome voice of night's melodious Bird
Singing that "Love is Best!"

II

The shy white Jasmine drew aside her veil,
Breathing faint fragrance on the loitering gale,
And nodded, nodded "Yes!
"Sweetest of all sweet things is Love! and wise!
Dance, Tulip! Pipe, fond Bird, thy melodies!
Wake, Rose of Loveliness!"

III.

"Yet," sighed the swaying Cypress, "who can tell
If Love be wise as sweet? if it be well
For Love to dance and sing?
I see—growing here always—year by year
The Bulbuls die, and on their grassy bier
Rose-petals scattering!"

IV.

All in that Garden green the Rose replied:
"Ah! Cypress, look! I put my leaves aside;
Mark what is 'mid this bush!
Three blue eggs in a closely-woven nest,
Sheltered, for music's sake, by branch and breast!
There will be Bulbuls! hush!"

V.

All in that Garden green the Bulbul trilled:
"Oh, foolish Cypress! thinking Love was killed
Because he seemed to cease:
My best-Belov'd hath secrets at her heart,
Gold seeds of summer-time, new buds to start;
There will be Roses! peace!"

VI.

Then lightlier danced the Tulips than before
To waftings of the perfumed breeze, and more
Chanted the Nightingale:
The fire-flies in the palms fresh lanterns lit;
Her zone of grace the blushing Rose unknit,
And blossomed, pure and pale!

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

From "AYLMER'S FIELD"

. . . a passion yet unborn perhaps
Lay hidden as the music of the moon
Sleeps in the plain eggs of the nightingale.

TENNYSON.

From "OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING"

Up this sea-shore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro, near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

. . . .

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

. . . . . .

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.
He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

WALT WHITMAN.

From

"GRASS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD"

AND as some moorland bird
Whom the still hunter's stalking steps have stirred,
When he stands mute, and nothing more is heard,
With slow succession and reluctant art
Grows upward from her bed,
Each move a muffled start,
And thro' the silent autumn covert red
Uplifts a throbbing head
That times the ambushed hunter's thudding heart;

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

As when a bird, fast by the fowler's net,
A moment doth forget
His fetters, and with desperate wings
A-sudden springs and falls,
And (while from happy clouds the skylark calls)
Still feebler springs
And fainter falls,
And still untamed upon the gory ground
With failing strength renews his deadly wound.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "THE ELM TREE"

ALONE he works—his ringing blows
Have banish'd bird and beast;
The Hind and Fawn have canter'd off
A hundred yards at least;
And on the maple's lofty top,
The linnet's song has ceased.

No eye his labour overlooks,
Or when he takes his rest;
Except the timid thrush that peeps
Above her secret nest,
Forbid by love to leave the young
Beneath her speckled breast.

. . . . .
. . . . .
. . . . .

The tall abounding Elm that grows
In hedgerows up and down;
In field and forest, copse and park,
And in the peopled town,
With colonies of noisy rooks
That nestle on its crown.

. . . . .

The Thrush's mate beside her sits
And pipes a merry lay;
The Dove is in the evergreens;
And on the Larch's spray
The Fly-bird flutters up and down,
To catch its tiny prey.

The gentle Hind and dappled Fawn
Are coming up the glade;
Each harmless furr'd and feather'd thing
Is glad, and not afraid—
But on my sadden'd spirit still
The Shadow leaves a shade.

HOOD.

From "RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY"

THE RHYME.

II.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

. . . . .
. . . . .
. . . . .

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the alder near,
in spring,—
Toll slowly.
Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks
out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

. . . . . .

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds
sang west,
Toll slowly.
And I said in underbreath,—all our life is mixed
with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds
sang west,—
Toll slowly.
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed
around our incompleteness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "THE RING AND THE BOOK"

. . . .

So when the she-dove breeds, strange yearnings
come
For the unknown shelter by undreamed-of shores,
And there is born a blood pulse in her heart
To fight if needs be, though with flap of wing,
For the wool-flock or the fur-tuft, though a hawk
Contest the prize,—wherefore, she knows not yet.

BROWNING.

From "QUEEN MARY"

THE lion needs but roar to guard his young;
The lapwing lies, says 'here' when they are there.

TENNYSON.

From

"THIRD PART OF KING HENRY VI."

ACT II. SCENE II.

Clifford. . . . . . .
THE smallest worm will turn, being trodden on;
And doves will peck in safeguard of their brood.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA"

ACT III. SCENE XI.

Enobarbus. . . . . To be furious,
Is to be frightened out of fear; and in that mood,
The dove will peck the estridge.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "A DARK MONTH"

XIX.

I AM only my love's
True lover,
With a nestful of songs, like doves
Under cover,
That I bring in my cap
Fresh caught,
To be laid on my small king's lap—
Worth just nought.

SWINBURNE.

V.

SWALLOWS – SUMMER – GARDEN

From "PARACELSUS"

I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

BROWNING.

From "PARACELSUS"

What should delight me like the news of friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?

BROWNING.

IN VOLHYNIA

In Volhynia the peasant mothers,
  When spring-time brings back the leaves,
And the first swallows dart and twitter
  Under the cottage eaves,—

Sit mute at their windows, and listen,
  With eyes brimming over with tears,
To the broken sounds which are wafted
  To their eager watching ears.

And throw out bread and honey
  To the birds as they scintillate by;
And hearts full of yearning and longing,
  Borne out on the wings of a sigh.

For they think that their dear lost children,
  The little ones who are gone,
Come back thus to the heartsick mothers
  Who are toiling and sorrowing on.

And those sunlit-wings and flashing
  White breasts, to their tear-dimmed eyes
Bring visions of white child-angels
  Floating in Paradise.

And again to the sounds they hearken,
  Which grew silent while incomplete,
The music of childish laughter,
  The patter of baby feet

Till the hearts which are barren and childless,
  The homes which are empty and cold:
The nests, whence the young have departed,
  Are filled with young life as of old.

Thus each spring, to those peasant mothers,
  Comes the old Past again and again;
And those sad hearts quicken and blossom
  In a rapture of sorrowless pain.

LEWIS MORRIS.

From "EVANGELINE"

OFT *in the barns they climbed to the populous nests*
on the rafters,
Seeking with eager eyes that wondrous stone, which
the swallow
Brings from the shore of the sea to restore the
sight of its fledglings,
Lucky was he who found that stone in the nest of
the swallow!

LONGFELLOW.

From "UNDER THE WILLOWS"

"THE thin-winged swallow skating on the air."

LOWELL.



The thin-winged Swallow skating on the air

LOWELL

From "AURORA LEIGH"

So silent, that you heard a young bird fall
From the top-nest in the neighbouring rookery
Through edging over rashly toward the light
The old rooks had already fled too far,
To hear the screech they fled with, though you saw
Some flying on still, like scatterings of dead leaves
In autumn-gusts, seen dark against the sky.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "POSTHUMOUS TALES." No. 10.

. . lead me to the west,
Where grew the elm-trees thick and tall,
Where rooks unnumber'd build their nest—
Deliberate birds, and prudent all·
Their notes, indeed, are harsh and rude,
But they're a social multitude.

CRABBE.

From "ROKEBY"

"HOARSE into middle air arose
The vespers of the roosting crows!"

SCOTT.

From "MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

ACT III SCENE II

Puck

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly.

SHAKESPEARE.

From

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

ACT IV. SCENE I.

First Lord. . . . chough's language, gabble enough, and good enough

SHAKESPEARE.

From "MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

ACT III. SCENE I.

BOTTOM (*sings*).

"THE ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill:"

. . . . . .

"The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer, nay;—"

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo" never so?

SHAKESPEARE.

From "CRAIGCROOK CASTLE"

THE Birds low crooning o'er their sweet Spring tunes
Still touch them with a riper luxury,
That Blackbird with the wine of joy is mellow,
And in his song keeps laughing, he's so jolly,
To think how summer pulps the fruit for him
His Apple tree hath felt the ruddying breath
Of May upon her yielding leafy lips,
Look how she flushes over! warm in white!

GERALD MASSEY.

From "UNDER THE WILLOWS"

FRANK HEARTED hostess of the field and wood,
Gypsy, whose roof is every spreading tree,
June is the pearl of our New England year
Still a surprisal, though expected long,
Her coming startles Long she lies in wait,
Makes many a feint, peeps forth, draws coyly back,
Then, from some southern ambush in the sky,
With one great gush of blossom storms the world.

A week ago the sparrow was divine:
The bluebird, shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence,
Was as a rhymer ere the poet come;
But now, O rapture! sunshine winged and voiced,
Pipe blown through by the warm wild breath of
the West
Shepherding his soft droves of fleecy cloud,
Gladness of woods, skies, waters, all in one,
The bobolink has come, and, like the soul
Of the sweet season vocal in a bird,
Gurgles in ecstasy we know not what
Save *June! Dear June! Now God be praised for
June.*

LOWELL.

MY GARDEN

O MY Garden, full of roses,
Red as passion and as sweet,
Failing not when summer closes,
Lasting on through cold and heat!

O my Garden, full of lilies,
White as peace, and very tall,
In your midst my heart so still is
I can hear the least leaf fall!

O my Garden, full of singing
From the birds that house therein,
Sweet notes down the sweet day ringing
Till the nightingales begin!

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

From "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

THERE the voluptuous nightingales
Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another, from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,—
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and, rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet that joy is almost pain.

SHELLEY.

From "THE KING'S QUHAIR"

"AND on the smalle greenè twistis[1] sat
The little sweetè nightingale, and sung
So loud and clear the hymnès consecrat
Of Lovè's use; now soft, now loud among,
That all the gardens and the wallès rung
  Right of their song. . . .

"Worship, ye that lovers been, this May,
For of your bliss the kalends are begun;
And sing with us, 'Away, winter, away!
Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun!'
Awake, for shame, that have your heavens won,
  And amorously lift up your headès all;
  Thank Love, that list you to his mercy call."

When they this song had sung a little thraw,[2]
They stent[3] awhile, and therewith unaffrayed,
As I beheld and cast mine eyne alaw,[4]
From bough to bough they hippèd,[5] and they
    played,

[1] Twigs. [2] A little time. [3] Rested quiet.
[4] Below. [5] Hopped.

And freshly in their birdès kind arrayed
  Their feathers new, and fret them in the sun,
  And thankèd Love that had their matès won.

JAMES I. OF SCOTLAND.

THE LOVER AND THE NIGHTINGALE

ANOTHER while the little Nightingale
That sat upon the twiggis would I chide,
And say right thus, "Where are thy notès small,
That thou of love hast sung this morrow-tide?
Seest thou not her that sitteth thee beside?
  For Venus' sake, the blissful goddess clear,
  Sing on again, and make my Lady cheer! . . .

"O little wretch, alas! mayst thou not see
Who cometh yond? Is it now time to
    wring?[1]
What sorry thought is fallen upon thee?
Open thy throat; hast thou no list to sing?
Alas! if thou of reason have feeling,
  Now, sweetè bird, say onès to me, 'Peep!'
  I die for woe; methinks thou 'ginnes sleep.

[1] Grieve.

"Hast thou no mind of love? Where is thy make?[1]
Or art thou sick, or smit with jealousy?
Or is she dead, or hath she thee forsake?
What is the cause of thy melancholy,
That thou no more list maken[2] melody?
Sluggard, for shame! lo, here thy golden hour,
That worth were hailly[3] all thy life's labour." . . .

I thought eke thus; "Gif I my handès clap,
Or gif I cost,[4] then will she flee away:
And, gif I hold my peace, then will she nap;
And, gif I cry, she wot not what I say.
Thus what is best I wot not by this day;
But blow, wind, blow, and do the leavès shake,
That some twig may wag, and make her to wake."

With that anon right he took up a song,
Where came anon more birdès and alight.
But then to hear the mirth was them among,
Over that too[5] to see the sweetè sight
Of her image, my spirit was so light,
Methought I flew for joy without arrest;
So were my wittès bounden all so fest.[6] . . .

[1] Mate. [2] To make. [3] Wholly.
[4] Cough. [5] Moreover, also. [6] Fast.

This was their song, as seemèd me full high,
With many uncouth [1] sweetè note and shill; [2]
And therewithal that Fair upward her eye
Would cast among, as it was Goddès will,
Where I might see, standing alone full still,
The fair faiture [3] that Nature, for maistry,
In her visage had wrought full lovingly.

And, when she walked had a little throw [4]
Under the sweetè greenè boughès bent,
Her fair fresh face, as white as any snow,
She turned has, and forth her wayès went;
But then began mine access and torment:
To seen her part, and follow I ne might,
Methought the day was turnèd into night.

JAMES I. OF SCOTLAND.

[1] Strange. [2] Shrill.
[3] Fashioning, workmanship. [4] Space

From "BALDER"

YONDER pensive thrush
Singing his rhythmic cadence, and, below,
The blackbird, earnest in the flowering thorn,
Chanting his mellow prose as tho' he told
A wonted story, ever old and new!
The fitful chaffinch, like a bashful youth
That hurries forth his love in sudden speech
And blushing pause, the loud and cheerful wren,
The sparrow's chirp, the swallow on the wall—
The swallow that pours out her liquid joy
Upon the morning flood of happiness,
Wherein it falls with silver sound and sweet
As water into water; these, and all
The warbling voices breathing of the South,
The slender treble of the tuneful year
With throbbing throats that chorus sunshine thro'
The vocal world, dainty, and soft, and low!
And high o'er all a languid noise of rooks,
Lost in bright air, circling in sunny calm,
Or cawing from the haunt of oaken green
The leafy rest of June!

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES"

XII.

"COME *thou*—thou never knewest
  A grief, that thou shouldst fear one;
Thou wearest still the happy look
  That shines beneath a dear one!
Thy humming-bird is in the sun,
  Thy cuckoo in the grove;[1]
And all the three broad worlds, for thee
  Are full of wandering love."
      The river floweth on.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "HIAWATHA"

PLEASANT was the journey homeward,
All the birds sang loud and sweetly
Songs of happiness and heart's-ease;
Sang the blue-bird, the Owaissa,

[1] Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

"Happy are you, Hiawatha,
Having such a wife to love you!"
Sang the Opechee, the robin,
"Happy are you, Laughing Water,
Having such a noble husband!"

LONGFELLOW.

From "RICHARD FOREST'S MID-SUMMER NIGHT"

When deep in fern we lie
With golden gorse above;
Deep sapphire sea and sky,
Ringing of larks on high,
Our whole world breathing love.

. . . .

Oh, how the nights are short
These heavenly nights of June!
The long hot day amort
With toil, the time to court
So stinted in its boon!

But three or four brief hours
  Between the afterglow
And dawnlight; while the flowers
Are dreaming in their bowers,
  And birds their song forego;

And in the noon of night,
  As in the noon of day,
Flowers close on their delight,
Birds nestle from their flight,
  Deep stillness holdeth sway:

Only the nightingales
  Yet sing to moon and stars,
Although their full song fails;
The corn-crake never quails,
  But through the silence jars. . . .

JAMES THOMSON.

VI.

SUMMER—WOODS

From "ROBIN HOOD AND GUY OF GISBORNE"

(OLD BALLAD.)

WHEN shaws[1] beene sheene, and shradds[2] full
fayre,
And leaves both large and longe,
Itt is merrye walking in the fayre forrèst
To heare the small birdes songe.

The woodweele sang and wold not cease,
Sitting upon the spraye,
So lowde, he wakened Robin Hood,
In the greenwood where he lay.

From "THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD"

(AN EARLY BALLAD.)

THESE pretty babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and downe;
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the town;

[1] Woods. [2] Shades.

Their prettye lippes with black-berries,
  Were all besmear'd and dyed,
And when they sawe the darksome night,
  They sat them downe and cryed.

Thus wandered these poor innocents,
  Till deathe did ende their grief,
In one anothers armes they dyed,
  As wanting due relief:
No burial this pretty pair
  Of any man receives,
Till robin-red-breast, piously
  Did cover them with leaves.

THE EAGLE AND THE ROBIN RED-BREAST

THE Prince of all the fethert kind
That with spread wings outflees the wind,
And tou'rs far out of human sicht
To view the schynand orb of licht:
This ryall bird, tho' braif and great,
And armit strang for stern debait,
Nae tyrant is, but condescends
Aftymes to treit inferiour friends.

  Ane day, at his command did flock
To his hie palace, on a rock,

The courtiers of ilk various syze
That swiftly swim in christal skyis.
Thither the valiant Tersals doup,
And heir rapacious Corbies croup,
With greidy Gleds, and slie Gormahs,
And dinsome Pyis, and clatterin Daws;
Proud Pecocks, and a hundred mae,
Bruscht up their pens that solemn day,
Bowd first submissive to my lord,
Then tuke thair places at his borde.

Mein tyme, quhile feisting on a fawn,
And drinking blude frae lammies drawn,
A tunefull Robin trig an zung,
Hard by upon a bour-tree sung.
He sang the Eagle's ryall lyne,
His persing ee and richt divyne
To sway out owre the fetherit thrang,
Quha dreid his martial bill and fang;
His flicht sublime, and eild renewit,
His mynd with clemencie endewit.
In safter notes, he sang his luve;
Mair hie, his beiring bolts for Jove.

The monarch bird, with blythness, heard
The chaunting litil silvan bard,
Calit up a Buzart quha was then
His favourite and chamberlane.

"Swith to my treasury," quod he,
"And to zon canty Robin gie
As meikle of our currant geir
As may mentain him throw the zeir;
We can weil spair't, and it's his due."
He bad, an furth the Judas flew
Straight to the bench quhair Robin sung,
And with a wickit lieand tung,
Said—"Ah! ze sing sae dull and ruch,
Ze haif deift our lugs mair than enuch.
His majestie hes a nyse eir,
And nae mair of zour stuff can beir;
Poke up zour pypes, be nae mair sene
At court; I warn ze as a frien."

He spak, quhyle Robinis swelling breist,
And drouping wings, his greif exprest;
The teirs ran happing doun his cheik,
Grit grew his hairt, he could nocht speik.
No for the tinsell of rewaird,
But that his notis met nae regaird.
Straicht to the schaw he spred his wing,
Resolvit again nae mair to sing,
Quhair princelie bountie is supprest
By sic with quhome they ar opprest,
Quha cannot beir, because they want it,
That ocht suld be to merit grantit.

ALLAN RAMSAY.

"TO ROBIN REDBREAST"

Laid out for dead, let thy last kindness be
With leaves and moss-work for to cover me;
And while the wood-nymphs my cold corpse inter,
Sing thou my dirge, sweet-warbling chorister!
For epitaph, in foliage, next write this:
Here, here the tomb of Robin Herrick is.

HERRICK.

AN EPITAPH ON A ROBIN-REDBREAST

Tread lightly here, for here 'tis said,
When piping winds are hushed around,
A small note wakes from underground,
Where now his tiny bones are laid.
No more in lone and leafless groves,
With ruffled wing and faded breast,
His friendless, homeless spirit roves;
—Gone to the world where birds are blest!
Where never cat glides o'er the green,
Or school-boy's giant form is seen;
But Love, and Joy, and smiling Spring
Inspire their little souls to sing!

ROGERS.

From "VACATION ODE"

AND let the genial note
That through green woods doth float
From viewless cuckoo, win your rapt ear's wise regard,
More than the cunning chime
Of curious-builded rhyme
From craft of smooth-lipped Greek, or deep-mouthed Roman bard

Let roar of foaming floods,
And breath of growing woods,
Wave round you with more joy than flags of conquering kings!
Nor let your dull thought go
With painful pace and slow,
When every bursting grove with twittering gladness rings!

JOHN STUART BLACKIE

From "BALLADS OF ROBIN HOOD"

The green leaves they look'd greener still,
And the thrush, renewing his tune,
Shook a loud note from his gladsome bill
Into the bright blue noon.

LEIGH HUNT.

From "EARTH'S VOICES"

THE SONG OF THE THRUSH.

When the beech-trees are green in the woodlands
And the thorns are whitened with may,
And the meadow-sweet blows and the yellow gorse blooms
I sit on a wind-waved spray,
And I sing through the livelong day
From the golden dawn till the sunset comes and the shadows of gloaming grey.

And I sing of the joy of the woodlands,
And the fragrance of wild-wood flowers,
And the song of the trees and the hum of the bees
In the honeysuckle bowers,
And the rustle of showers
And the voice of the west-wind calling as through glades and green branches he scours.

When the sunset glows over the woodlands
More sweet rings my lyrical cry
With the pain of my yearning to be 'mid the burning
And beautiful colours that lie
'Midst the gold of the sun-down sky,
Where over the purple and crimson and amber the rose-pink cloud-curls fly.

Sweet, sweet swells my voice thro' the woodlands,
Repetitive, marvellous, rare:
And the song-birds cease singing as my music goes ringing
And eddying echoing there,
Now wild and now debonair,
Now fill'd with a tumult of passion that throbs like a pulse in the hush'd warm air!

WILLIAM SHARP.

From "ESSAYS IN CLASSICAL METRES"

ELEGIAC II.

TRUNKS the forest yielded with gums ambrosial oozing,
Boughs with apples laden beautiful, Hesperian,
Golden, odoriferous, perfume exhaling about them,
Orbs in a dark umbrage luminous and radiant;
To the palate grateful, more luscious were not in Eden,
Or in that fabled garden of Alcinoüs;
Out of a dark umbrage sounds also musical issued,
Birds their sweet transports uttering in melody:
Thrushes clear piping, wood-pigeons cooing, arousing
Loudly the nightingale, loudly the sylvan echoes:
Waters transpicuous flowed under, flowed to the list'ning
Ear with a soft murmur, softly soporiferous;
Nor, with ebon locks too, there wanted, circling, attentive
Unto the sweet fluting, girls, of a swarthy shepherd;
Over a sunny level their flocks are lazily feeding,
They of Amor musing rest in a leafy cavern.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

CARRIED by winds about the beechwood dense,
The scent of lilies rose up in the air,
And store of Juno's fowl was roosting there,
Or moving lazily across the grass.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "PLEASURES OF MEMORY"

LED by what chart, transports the timid dove
The wreaths of conquest, or the vows of love?
Say, thro' the clouds what compass points her
flight?
Monarchs have gazed, and nations blessed the sight.
Pile rocks on rocks, bid woods and mountains rise,
Eclipse her native shades, her native skies:—
'Tis vain! thro' Ether s pathless wilds she goes,
And lights at last where all her cares repose.
Sweet bird! thy truth shall Harlem's walls attest,
And unborn ages consecrate thy nest.

ROGERS.

From "SACRED SONGS"

THE BIRD LET LOOSE.

THE bird, let loose in Eastern skies,[1]
When hastening fondly home,
Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies
Where idle warblers roam.
But high she shoots through air and light,
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,
Nor shadow dims her way.

MOORE.

THE WINGS OF THE DOVE

"Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest."—PSALM lv.

OH! for thy wings, thou dove!
Now sailing by with sunshine on thy breast;
That, borne like thee above,
I too might flee away, and be at rest!

[1] The carrier-pigeon.

O

Where wilt thou fold those plumes,
Bird of the forest-shadows, holiest bird?
In what rich leafy glooms,
By the sweet voice of hidden waters stirr'd?

Over what blessed home,
What roof with dark, deep Summer foliage crown'd,
O! fair as ocean's foam!
Shall thy bright bosom shed a gleam around?

Or seek'st thou some old shrine
Of nymph or saint, no more by votary woo'd,
Though still, as if divine,
Breathing a spirit o'er the solitude?

Yet wherefore ask thy way?
Blest, ever blest, whate'er its aim, thou art!
Unto the greenwood spray,
Bearing no dark remembrance at thy heart!

No echoes that will blend
A sadness with the whispers of the grove;
No memory of a friend
Far off, or dead, or changed to thee, thou dove!

Oh! to some cool recess
Take, take me with thee on the summer wind,
Leaving the weariness
And all the fever of this life behind:

The aching and the void
Within the heart, whereunto none reply,
The young bright hopes destroy'd—
Bird! bear me with thee through the sunny sky!

Wild wish, and longing vain,
And brief upspringing to be glad and free!
Go to thy woodland reign:
My soul is bound and held—I may not flee.

For even by all the fears
And thoughts that haunt my dreams—untold, un known,
And burning woman's tears
Pour'd from mine eyes in silence and alone;

Had I thy wings, thou dove!
High 'midst the gorgeous isles of cloud to soar,
Soon the strong cords of love
Would draw me earthwards—homewards—yet once more.

MRS. HEMANS.

From "PARADISE AND THE PERI"

Fair gardens, shining streams, with ranks
Of golden melons on their banks.
More golden where the sun-light falls ;—
Gay lizards, glittering on the walls
Of ruin'd shrines, busy and bright,
As they were all alive with light :—
And, yet more splendid, numerous flocks
Of pigeons, settling on the rocks,
With their rich restless wings, that gleam
Variously in the crimson beam
Of the warm west,—as if inlaid
With brilliants from the mine, or made
Of tearless rainbows, such as span
Th' unclouded skies of Peristan !
And then, the mingling sounds that come,
Of shepherd's ancient reed, with hum
Of the wild bees of Palestine,
  Banqueting through the flowery vales ;—
And, Jordan, those sweet banks of thine,
  And woods, so full of nightingales !

MOORE.

VII.

WOOD — SOLITUDE — STREAM

From "LADY LAURA"

AT emerald palace-portals peer
 Quick eyes of Birds that sing i' the sun;
 Their hearts with music overrun;
Listens each leafy forest-ear.

GERALD MASSEY.

From "MISCELLANEOUS POEMS"

SOMETIMES goldfinches one by one will drop
From low-hung branches: little space they stop;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak:
Or perhaps, to show their black and golden wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

KEATS.

From "THE SPANISH GYPSY"

A FOUNTAIN near, vase-shapen and broad-lipped,
Where timorous birds alight with tiny feet,
And hesitate and bend wise listening ears,
And fly away again with undipped beak.

GEORGE ELIOT.

From "AN ISLAND"

XVI.

ONE dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it;
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "MAIDEN-SONG"

LOVE-NOTED like the wood-pigeon
Who hides herself for love,
Yet cannot keep her secret safe,
But coos and coos thereof.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

From "LANCELOT AND ELAINE"

THEN as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'

TENNYSON.

From "THE HAUNTED TREE"

AROUND, in all the joy of spring,
The sinless birds were carolling.

W. M. PRAED.

THE YELLOW-HAMMER'S SONG

OUT on the waste, a little lonely bird, I flit and I sing:
My breast is yellow as sunshine, and light as the wind my wing.

The golden gorse me shelters, in the tufted grass is my nest,
And *sweet, sweet, sweet the world*, though the wind blow east or west.

The harebells chime their music, the canna floats white in the breeze,
But as for me, I flit to and fro and I sing at my ease.

When the thyme is dripping with dew, and the hill-
wind beareth along
The pungent scent of the gale, loudly I sing my
morning song.

When the sun beats on the gorse, the broom, and
the budding heather,
I flit from spray to spray and my song is of the
golden weather.

When the moor-fowl sink to their rest, and the sky
is soft rose-red,
I sing of the crescent-moon and the single star
overhead.

Out on the waste, out on the waste, I flit all day as
I sing
*Sweet, sweet, sweet is the world—dear world—how
beautiful everything!*

Only a little lonely bird that loveth the moorland
waste,
And little perhaps of the joy of the world is that
which I taste,

But out on the wild free moorlands, on the gold
gorse-boughs I swing,
And *sweet, sweet, sweet the world; oh sweet, ah
sweet!* the song that I sing.

WILLIAM SHARP.

From "ENDYMION"

"Why must such desolation betide
As that thou speakest of? Are not these green nooks
Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledged little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—
Speak not of grief——"

Keats.

From "SLEEP AND POETRY"

Yet I rejoice: a myrtle fairer than
E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds
Lifts its sweet heap into the air, and feeds
A silent space with ever-sprouting green.
All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen,
Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,
Nibble the little cuppèd flowers and sing.

Keats.

From "IMITATION OF SPENSER"

THERE the kingfisher saw his plumage bright,
Vying with fish of brilliant dye below;
Whose silken fins' and golden scales' light
Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow:
There saw the swan his neck of archèd snow,
And oar'd himself along with majesty:
Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show
Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

KEATS.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

O THE sweet valley of deep grass,
Where-through the summer stream doth pass,
In chain of shallow, and still pool,
From misty morn to evening cool;
Where the black ivy creeps and twines
O'er the dark-armed, red-trunked pines,

Whence clattering the pigeon flits,
Or, brooding o'er her thin eggs, sits,
And every hollow of the hills
With echoing song the mavis fills.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

Along whose bank a flickering shade and cool,
Grey willows made, and all about they heard
The warble of the small brown river-bird.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "PARACELSUS"

Festus. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,

Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

BROWNING.

From "JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH"

OG's thigh-bone—if ye deem its measure strange,
Myself can witness to much length of shank
Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
Once halting, I was minded to exchange
Noon heat for cool. Quoth I "On many a grange
I have seen storks perch—legs both long and lank:
Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,
Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!" "Do not so!"
Warned me a voice from heaven "A man let drop

His axe into that shallow rivulet—
As thou accountest—seventy years ago:
It fell and fell and still without a stop
Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet."

BROWNING.

From "BALDER"

On the bank
The nodding moor-hen lands to preen her quills.
The trout hath left the alders of the pool
And basks. Her beak the brooding kingfisher
Shows, breathless, at her callow hole above
The brook; within the eddies of the brook
The water-mouse dissolves and reappears;
Therefore 'tis halcyon weather.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

So still she stood, that the quick water-hen
Noted her not, as through the blue mouse-ear
He made his way; the conies drew anear,
Nibbling the grass, and from an oak-twig nigh
A thrush poured forth his song unceasingly.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

FRAGMENT

At her step the water-hen
Springs from her nook, and skimming the clear
stream,
Ripples its waters in a sinuous curve,
And dives again in safety.

D. G. ROSSETTI.

From "ENDYMION"

Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear;
And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise.

KEATS.

From "A VISION OF POETS"

A harmony sublime and plain
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplext chords, and soared at once,
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves, as
It passed to God! . . .

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "A BOOK OF DREAMS"

PART II.

I.

OLD earth is rich with many a nest
  Of softness ever new,
Deep, delicate, and full of rest—
  But loveliest there are two·
I may not tell them but to minds
  That are as white as they;
But none will hear, of other kinds—
  They all are turned away.

On foamy mounds betwixt the wings
  Of a white, sailing swan—
A flaky bed of shelterings—
  There you will find the one.
The other—. Well, it will not out,
  Nor need I tell it you:
I've told you one, and can you doubt,
  When there are only two?

GEORGE MACDONALD.

From "FINGAL"

"BESIDE the murmur of Branno thou didst often sit, O maid! thy white bosom rose frequent, like the down of the swan when slow she swims on the lake, and side-long winds blow on her ruffled wing."

OSSIAN.

From "LEWTI"

HUSH! my heedless feet from under
 Slip the crumbling banks for ever:
Like echoes to a distant thunder,
 They plunge into the gentle river.
The river-swans have heard my tread,
And startle from their reedy bed.
O beauteous birds! methinks ye measure
 Your movements to some heavenly tune!
O beauteous birds! 'tis such a pleasure
 To see you move beneath the moon,
I would it were your true delight
To sleep by day and wake all night.

I know the place where Lewti lies,
When silent night has closed her eyes:

It is a breezy jasmine-bower,
The nightingale sings o'er her head:
Voice of the night! had I the power
That leafy labyrinth to thread,
And creep, like thee, with soundless tread,
I then might view her bosom white
Heaving lovely to my sight,
As these two swans together heave
On the gently-swelling wave.

Oh! that she saw me in a dream,
And dreamt that I had died for care.

S. T. COLERIDGE.

From "ODE LIX."

THEN wake thee from thy magic slumbers,
Breathe to the soft and Phrygian numbers,
Which, as my trembling lips repeat,
Thy chords shall echo back as sweet.
The cygnet thus, with fading notes,
As down Caÿster's tide he floats,
Plays with his snowy plumage fair
Upon the wanton murmuring air,
Which amorously lingers round,
And sighs responsive sound for sound!

MOORE.

From "PAULINE"

And clouds float white above like broods of swans.

BROWNING.

From "THE LIGHT OF ASIA"

BOOK THE FIRST.

But it befell
In the Royal garden on a day of spring,
A flock of wild swans passed, voyaging north
To their nest-places on Himâla's breast.
Calling in love-notes down their snowy line
The bright birds flew, by fond love piloted;
And Devadatta, cousin of the Prince,
Pointed his bow, and loosed a wilful shaft
Which found the wide wing of the foremost swan
Broad-spread to glide upon the free blue road,
So that it fell, the bitter arrow fixed,
Bright scarlet blood-gouts staining the pure plumes.
Which seeing, Prince Siddârtha took the bird
Tenderly up, rested it in his lap—

Sitting with knees crossed, as Lord Buddha sits—
And, soothing with a touch the wild thing's fright,
Composed its ruffled vans, calmed its quick heart,
Caressed it into peace with light kind palms
As soft as plantain-leaves an hour unrolled;
And while the left hand held, the right hand drew
The cruel steel forth from the wound and laid
Cool leaves and healing honey on the smart.
Yet all so little knew the boy of pain
That curiously into his wrist he pressed
The arrow's barb, and winced to feel its sting,
And turned with tears to soothe his bird again.
  Then some one came who said, "My Prince hath shot
A swan, which fell among the roses here,
He bids me pray you send it. Will you send?"
"Nay," quoth Siddârtha, "if the bird were dead
To send it to the slayer might be well,
But the swan lives; my cousin hath but killed
The god-like speed which throbbed in this white wing."
And Devadatta answered, "The wild thing,
Living or dead, is his who fetched it down;
'Twas no man's in the clouds, but fall'n 'tis mine,
Give me my prize, fair Cousin." Then our Lord
Laid the swan's neck beside his own smooth cheek
And gravely spake, "Say no! the bird is mine,
The first of myriad things which shall be mine

By right of mercy and love's lordliness.
For now I know, by what within me stirs,
That I shall teach compassion unto men
And be a speechless world's interpreter,
Abating this accursed flood of woe,
Not man's alone; but, if the Prince disputes,
Let him submit this matter to the wise
And we will wait their word." So was it done;
In full divan the business had debate,
And many thought this thing and many that,
Till there arose an unknown priest who said,
"If life be aught. the saviour of a life
Owns more the living thing than he can own
Who sought to slay—the slayer spoils and wastes,
The cherisher sustains. give him the bird:"
Which judgment all found just; but when the King
Sought out the sage for honour, he was gone,
And some one saw a hooded snake glide forth,—
The gods come ofttimes thus! So our Lord Buddh
Began his works of mercy.

Yet not more
Knew he as yet of grief than that one bird's,
Which, being healed, went joyous to its kind.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

From "THE LAND EAST OF THE SUN"

He started up, for through the trees
A mighty rushing sound he heard,
As of the wings of many a bird;
And, stark awake, with beating heart,
He put the hawthorn twigs apart,
And yet saw no more wondrous thing
Than seven white swans, who on wide wing
Went circling round, till one by one
They dropped the dewy grass upon
He smiled thereat, and thought to shout
And scare them off; but yet a doubt
Clung to him, as he gazed on those,
And in the brake he held him close,
And watched them bridle there, and preen
Their snowy feathers well beseen:
So near they were, that he a stone
Might have cast o'er the furthest one
With his left hand, as there he lay.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

SCENE IV.

I CANNOT tell my joy when o'er a lake,
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward,
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky.

SHELLEY.

From "HIAWATHA"

To a lake with many islands
Came the breathless Pau-Puk-Keewis,
Where among the water-lilies
Pishnekuh, the brant, were sailing;
Through the tufts of rushes floating,
Steering through the reedy islands,
Now their broad black beaks they lifted,
Now they plunged beneath the water,

Now they darkened in the shadow,
Now they brightened in the sunshine.
"Pishnekuh!" cried Pau-Puk-Keewis,
"Pishnekuh, my brothers!" said he,
"Change me to a brant with plumage,
With a shining neck and feathers,
Make me large and make me larger,
Ten times larger than the others."

LONGFELLOW.

ON SCARING SOME WATERFOWL IN LOCH-TURIT

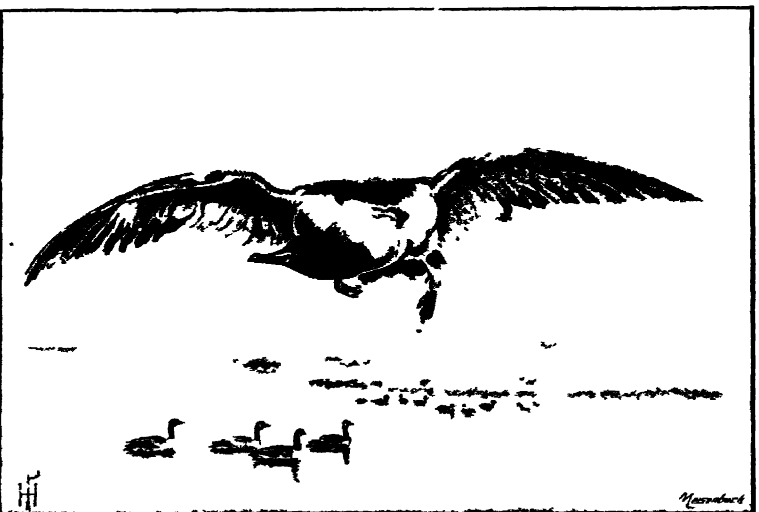
Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your watery haunt forsake?
Tell me, fellow creatures, why
At my presence thus you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties?
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy feed, or wanton lave;
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,
Bide the surging billow's shock.

Conscious, blushing for our race,
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.
Man, your proud usurping foe,
Would be lord of all below:
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,
Tyrant stern to all beside.

The eagle, from the cliffy brow,
Marking you his prey below,
In his breast no pity dwells,
Strong necessity compels.
But man, to whom alone is given
A ray direct from pitying Heaven,
Glories in his heart humane—
And creatures for his pleasure slain.

In these savage, liquid plains,
Only known to wand'ring swains,
Where the mossy riv'let strays;
Far from human haunts and ways,
All on Nature you depend,
And life's poor season peaceful spend.

Or, if man's superior might,
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his powers you scorn;



O t t e lofty eth r e
M t with all his p ver s u sc r

S iftly eek e ing wi
Oth r h e a l ther r

Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave

BURNS

From "DONICA"

The fisher in the lake below
Durst never cast his net,
Nor ever swallow in its waves
Her passing wings would wet

SOUTHEY

From "CALIDORE"

Scarce can his clear and nimble eyesight follow
The freaks and dartings of the black wing'd swallow,
Delighting much, to see it half at rest,
Dip so refreshingly its wings and breast
'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon,
The widening circles into nothing gone

KEATS.

"THE PROLOGUE"

O SWALLOW, with resistless wing, that hold'st the air in fee,
O swallow, with thy joyous sweep o'er earth and sunlit sea,
O swallow, who, if night were thine, would'st wheel amongst the stars,
Why linger round the eaves?
Unhappy! free of all the world, hast knit thy soul to clay?
And glued thy heart upon the wall, thou swiftest child of day?
Claim, glorious wing, thy heritage; break, break thy prison bars,
Nor linger round the eaves.

Sweep, glorious wings, adown the wind; fly, swallow, to the west;
Before thee, life and liberty; behind, a ruined nest.
Blow, freshening breeze, sweep, rapid wing, for all the winds are thine,
The nest is only clay.

The rapid wings were stretched in flight, the
swallow sped away,
And left its nest beneath the eaves, the much-
loved bit of clay,
Turned with the sun, to go where'er the happy sun
might shine,
And passed into the day.

EDWARD THRING.
(*From "The Borth Lyrics."*)

ITYLUS

SWALLOW, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
  My heart in me is a molten ember
    And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow,
  Could I forget or thou remember,
    Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
  The heart's division divideth us.
    Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
  To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
    The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
  I pray thee sing not a little space.
    Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
  The small slain body, the flower-like face,
    Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
  The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
    The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?
  Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
    But the world shall end when I forget.

SWINBURNE.

From

"THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW"

So went she musing down her thoughts; but he,
Sweet-hearted as a bird that takes the sun
With clear strong eyes, and feels the glad god run
Bright through his blood and wide rejoicing wings,
And opens all himself to heaven and sings,
Made her mind light and full of noble mirth
With words and songs the gladdest grown on earth,
Till she was blithe and high of heart as he.
So swam the Swallow through the springing sea.

SWINBURNE.

From "KILDROSTAN"

WHAT has come over the sunshine?
It is like a dream of bliss.
What has come over the pine-woods?
Was ever a day like this?

O white-throat swallow flicking
  The loch with long wing-tips,
Hear you the low sweet laughter
  Comes rippling from its lips?

What has come over the waters?
  What has come over the trees?
Never were rills and fountains
  So merrily voiced as these.
O throstle softly piping
  High on the topmost bough,
I hear a new song singing,
  Is it my heart, or thou?

WALTER C. SMITH.

From "KILDROSTAN"

. . . ON many a knoll,
Silent the golden plovers kept their seat,
  And in the stream
  That lapsed as in a dream
The heron slumbered, cooling breast and feet,
And you could see the air all tremulous with heat.

WALTER C. SMITH.

From "IN MEMORIAM"

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
  The distance takes a lovelier hue,
  And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

TENNYSON.

VIII.

MOORLAND — SKYLARK — SEA

From "THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL"

And what is so rare as a day in June?
   Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
   And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
   An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
   Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
   Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
   The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean
   To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
   Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
   With the deluge of summer it receives;

His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest,—
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

. . . . . .

We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing;
The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
That dandelions are blossoming near,
  That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;
And if the breeze kept the good news back,
For other couriers we should not lack;
  We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing,—
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
  Tells all in his lusty crowing!

LOWELL.

From "WHAT MAKES SUMMER"

'Tis the sun that rises early,
Shining, shining all day rarely;
Drawing up the larks to meet him,
Earth's bird-angels, wild to greet him.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

ADDRESS TO THE WOODLARK

O, STAY, sweet warbling woodlark, stay,
Nor quit me for the trembling spray;
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
  Thy soothing, fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that wad touch her heart
  Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
O, nocht but love and sorrow joined,
  Sic notes o' woe could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care,
O' speechless grief, and dark despair;
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair!
  Or my poor heart is broken!

BURNS.

TO A SKY-LARK

UP with me! up with me, into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;
Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With all the heavens about thee ringing.
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!
I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a fairy,
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness abont thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Up with me, up with me, high and high,
To thy banqueting-place in the sky!

Joyous as morning,
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest, for thy love and thy rest:
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark! thou wouldst be loath
To be such a traveller as I.
Happy, happy liver!

With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to th' Almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both!
Hearing thee, or else some other,
As merry a brother,
I on the earth will go plodding on,
By myself, cheerfully, till the day is done.

WORDSWORTH.

THE WAKING OF THE LARK

I.

O BONNIE bird, that in the brake, exultant, dost prepare thee—
As poets do whose thoughts are true, for wings that will upbear thee—
Oh! tell me, tell me, bonnie bird,
Canst thou not pipe of hope deferred?
Or canst thou sing of naught but Spring among the golden meadows?

II.

Methinks a bard (and thou art one) should suit his song to sorrow,
And tell of pain, as well as gain, that waits us on the morrow;

But thou art not a prophet, thou,
If naught but joy can touch thee now;
If, in thy heart, thou hast no vow that speaks of
Nature's anguish.

III.

Oh! I have held my sorrows dear, and felt, tho'
poor and slighted,
The songs we love are those we hear when love is
unrequited.
But thou art still the slave of dawn,
And canst not sing till night be gone,
Till o'er the pathway of the fawn the sunbeams
shine and quiver.

IV.

Thou art the minion of the sun that rises in his
splendour,
And canst not spare for Dian fair the songs that
should attend her.
The moon, so sad and silver-pale,
Is mistress of the nightingale;
And thou wilt sing on hill and dale no ditties in
the darkness.

V

For Queen and King thou wilt not spare one note
 of thine outpouring;
Thou art as free as breezes be on Nature's velvet
 flooring.
 The daisy, with its hood undone,
 The grass, the sunlight, and the sun—
These are the joys, thou holy one, that pay thee
 for thy singing.

VI.

Oh, hush! Oh, hush! how wild a gush of rapture
 in the distance,—
A roll of rhymes, a toll of chimes, a cry for love's
 assistance;
 A sound that wells from happy throats,
 A flood of song where beauty floats,
And where our thoughts, like golden boats, do
 seem to cross a river.

VII.

This is the advent of the lark—the priest in gray
 apparel—
Who doth prepare to trill in air his sinless Summer
 carol;

This is the prelude to the lay
The birds did sing in Cæsar's day,
And will again, for aye and aye, in praise of God's creation.

VIII.

O dainty thing, on wonder's wing. by life and love elated,
Oh! sing aloud from cloud to cloud, till day be consecrated;
Till from the gateways of the morn,
The sun, with all his light unshorn,
His robes of darkness round him torn, doth scale the lofty heavens!

ERIC MACKAY.

TO A SKY-LARK

I.

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

II.

Higher still and higher
  From the earth thou springest:
Like a cloud of fire
  The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

III.

In the golden lightning
  Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are brightening,
  Thou dost float and run,
Like an embodied joy whose race is just begun.

IV.

The pale purple even
  Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
  In the broad daylight,
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight—

V.

Keen as are the arrows
  Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
  In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel, that it is there.

VI.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

VII.

What thou art we know not ;
What is most like thee ?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody :—

VIII.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

IX.

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love which overflows her bower :

X.

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

XI.

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves.

XII.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain awakened flowers,—
All that ever was,
Joyous and clear and fresh,—thy music doth surpass.

XIII.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

XIV.

Chorus hymeneal
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt—
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

XV.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

XVI.

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

XVII.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

XVIII.

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddes
thought.

XIX.

Yet, if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear,
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

XX.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

XXI.

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know:
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then as I am listening now.

SHELLEY.

THE SKYLARK

Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling place –
Oh to abide in the desert with thee!

Wild is thy lay and loud,
Far in the downy cloud,
Love gives it energy, love gave it birth.
Where, on thy dewy wing,
Where art thou journeying?
Thy lay is in heaven, thy love is on earth.

O'er fell and fountain sheen,
O'er moor and mountain green,
O'er the red streamer that heralds the day,
Over the cloudlet dim,
Over the rainbow's rim,
Musical cherub, soar, singing, away!

Then, when the gloaming comes,
Low in the heather blooms
Sweet will thy welcome and bed of love be!
Emblem of happiness,
Blest is thy dwelling-place—
Oh to abide in the desert with thee!

HOGG.

SONNET

FALSE POETS AND TRUE.

Look how the lark soars upward and is gone,
Turning a spirit as he nears the sky!
His voice is heard, but body there is none
To fix the vague excursions of the eye.
So, poets' songs are with us, tho' they die
Obscured, and hid by death's oblivious shroud,
And Earth inherits the rich melody,
Like raining music from the morning cloud.
Yet, few there be who pipe so sweet and loud,
Their voices reach us through the lapse of space:
The noisy day is deafen'd by a crowd
Of undistinguish'd birds, a twittering race;
But only lark and nightingale forlorn
Fill up the silences of night and morn.

HOOD.

ECSTASY

I CANNOT sing to thee as I would sing
 If I were quickened like the holy lark
With fire from Heaven and sunlight on his wing,
 Who wakes the world with witcheries of the dark
Renewed in rapture in the reddening air.
 A thing of splendour do I deem him then,
A feather'd frenzy with an angel's throat,
A something sweet that somewhere seems to float
 'Twixt earth and sky, to be a sign to men.
He fills me with such wonder and despair!
 I long to kiss thy locks, so golden bright.
As he doth kiss the tresses of the sun.
Oh! bid me sing to thee, my chosen one,
 And do thou teach me, Love, to sing aright!

ERIC MACKAY.

THE LARK

I HEAR the lark to-day; he sings
  Against a hazy April cloud—
The glorious little soul with wings!
  Who sings so sweet and clear and loud,
That all the fields that lie around
Are tingling with melodious sound.

. . . . . .

Thou poet of heaven! for of this earth
  We deem thee not: I stand to-day
With all the ripple of thy mirth
  Around, and daily thoughts away,
Hearing thy glorious music fall
  In one continuous madrigal.

And as I listen in this mood
  I leap to feel thy minstrel strain
Draw the street-fever from the blood.
  The city from the weary brain,
Till I am left such boon to bless,
Full of unthinking happiness.

ALEXANDER ANDERSON
("Surfaceman").

From "EARLY POEMS"

. . . Oft with patient ear
Long-listening to the viewless sky-lark's note
(Viewless, or haply for a moment seen
Gleaming on sunny wing)—"and such," I said,
"The inobtrusive song of happiness—
Unearthly minstrelsy! then only heard
When the soul seeks to hear when all is hushed
And the heart listens!"

S. T. COLERIDGE.

From "BLACK-EYED SUSAN"

"So sweet the lark, high-poised in air,
  Shuts close his pinions to his breast
(If, chance his mate's shrill call he hear)
  And drops at once into her nest."

JOHN GAY, 1732.

From "KILDROSTAN"

. the bird of heaven
A lark full throated up in the blue heavens,
That all day singeth to his love below,
And only can be silent by her side –

WALTER C SMITH

From "TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY"

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
Thou's met me in an evil hour,
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem
To spare thee now is past my power,
Thou bonnie gem.
Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet
The purpling east.

BURNS.

From

"LEADER-HAUGHS AND YARROW"

A MILE below wha lists to ride,
  They'll hear the mavis singing;
Into St. Leonard's banks she'll bide,
  Sweet birks her head o'erhinging;
The lintwhite loud and Progne proud,
  With tuneful throats and narrow,
Into St. Leonard's banks they sing
  As sweetly as in Yarrow.

The lapwing lilteth o'er the lea,
  With nimble wing she sporteth;
But vows she'll flee far frae the tree
  Where Philomel resorteth;
By break of day the lark can say,
  I'll bid you a good-morrow,
I'll streek[1] my wing, and, mounting, sing
  O'er Leader-Haughs and Yarrow.

NICOL BURN.
(An old Border Minstrel.)

[1] Stretch

From "FEARS IN SOLITUDE"

A GREEN and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing sky-lark ever poised himself.

. . . . . .

Oh! tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise!
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
While from the singing-lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best,)
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame:
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing-lark;
That singest like an angel in the clouds!

S. T. COLERIDGE.

From "THE PILGRIMS OF THE SUN"

No sound was heard, except the lonely rail
Harping his ordinal adown the dale.

HOGG.

From "EPISTLE TO MY BROTHER GEORGE"

I SEE the lark down-dropping to his nest,
And the broad-wing'd sea-gull never at rest;
For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
His breast is dancing on the restless sea.

KEATS.

From "HYPERION"

I . . . .
. . . sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
O melody no more! for while I sang,
And with poor skill let pass into the breeze

The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
Just opposite, an island of the sea,
There came enchantment with the shifting wind
That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
With that new blissful golden melody.
A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string:
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once.

KEATS.

From "HOME WOUNDED"

Among the thicket hazels of the brake
Perchance some nightingale doth shake
His feathers, and the air is full of song;
In those old days when I was young and strong,
He used to sing on yonder garden tree,
Beside the nursery.

Ah, I remember how I loved to wake,
And find him singing on the self-same bough—
(I know it even now)
Where, since the flit of bat,
In ceaseless voice he sat,
Trying the spring night over, like a tune,
Beneath the vernal moon;
And while I listed long,
Day rose, and still he sang,
And all his stanchless song,
As something falling unaware,
Fell out of the tall trees he sang among,
Fell ringing down the ringing morn, and rang—,
Rang like a golden jewel down a golden stair.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "THE ANCIENT MARINER"

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

S. T. COLERIDGE.

From "PARACELSUS"

Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy:
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture.

BROWNING

From "UNDERWOODS"

VI. A VISIT FROM THE SEA.

Far from the loud sea beaches
  Where he goes fishing and crying,
Here in the inland garden
  Why is the sea-gull flying?

Here are no fish to dive for:
  Here is the corn and lea;
Here are the green trees rustling.
  Hie away home to sea!

Fresh is the river water
  And quiet among the rushes;
This is no home for the sea-gull
  But for the rooks and thrushes.

Pity the bird that has wandered!
  Pity the sailor ashore!
Hurry him home to the ocean,
  Let him come here no more!

High on the sea-cliff ledges
  The white gulls are trooping and crying,
Here among rooks and roses,
  Why is the sea-gull flying?

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

From "SKERRYVORE"

THE PARALLEL.

. . . and when the truant gull
Skims the green level of the lawn, his wing
Dispetals roses; . . .

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO A SEA-BIRD

SANTA CRUZ, 1869.

SAUNTERING hither on listless wings,
Careless vagabond of the sea,
Little thou heedest the surf that sings,
The bar that thunders, the shale that rings,—
Give me to keep thy company.

Little thou hast, old friend, that's new;
Storms and wrecks are old things to thee;
Sick am I of these changes too,
Little to care for, little to rue.
I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

All of thy wanderings, far and near,
Bring thee at last to shore and me;
All of my journeyings end them here,
This our tether must be our cheer,—
I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

Lazily rocking on ocean's breast,
Something in common, old friend, have we:
Thou on the shingle seek'st thy nest,
I to the waters look for rest,—
I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

BRET HARTE.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

ACROSS the which the white-winged fowl did flit
From cliff to cliff, and on the sandy bar,
The fresh waves and the salt waves were at war
At turning of the tide.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

—Lilla's dancing feet, that gleam and shoot
Rapid and white as sea-birds o'er the deep!

MOORE.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

AROUND thee shall glisten the loveliest amber
That ever the sorrowing sea-bird has wept.[1]
MOORE.

From "OFF SHORE"

WHITE glories of wings
As of seafaring birds
That flock from the springs
Of the sunrise in herds
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at the change of his words:

. . . . .

At the charge of his word
Bidding pause, bidding haste,
When the ranks are stirred
And the lines displaced,
They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan green waste.

. . . . . .

[1] Some naturalists have imagined that amber is a concretion of the tears of birds.

But the sun stands fast,
And the sea burns bright,
And the flight of them past
Is no more than the flight
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and afloat in the light.

SWINBURNE.

From "THE LORD OF THE ISLES"

"Merrily, merrily, goes the bark
On a breeze from the Northward free;
So shoots through the morning sky the lark
Or the swan through the summer sea."

SCOTT.

From "ON THE VERGE"

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that plunge and scream.

SWINBURNE.

From "THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER"

. . . .

"At length did cross an Albatross,
Through the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew,
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

"God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—"With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross."

S. T. COLERIDGE.

THE SEA-DIVER

My way is on the bright blue sea,
  My sleep upon the rocky tide:
And many an eye has followed me,
  Where billows clasp the worn sea-side.

My plumage bears the crimson blush,
  When ocean by the sun is kissed!
When fades the evening's purple flush,
  My dark wing cleaves the silver mist.

Full many a fathom down beneath
  The bright arch of the splendid deep,
My ear has heard the sea-shell breathe
  O'er living myriads in their sleep.

They rested by the coral throne,
  And by the pearly diadem,
Where the pale sea-grape had o'ergrown
  The glorious dwelling made for them.

At night upon my storm-drenched wing,
  I poised above a helmless bark,
And soon I saw the shattered thing
  Had passed away and left no mark.

And when the wind and storm had done,
  A ship that had rode out the gale,
Sunk down without a signal-gun,
  And none was left to tell the tale.

I saw the pomp of day depart—
  The cloud resign its golden crown,
When to the ocean's beating heart
  The sailor's wasted corse went down.

Peace be to those whose graves are made
  Beneath the bright and silver sea!
Peace that their relics there were laid,
  With no vain pride and pageantry.

LONGFELLOW.

TO THE MAN-OF-WAR-BIRD

Thou who hast slept all night upon the storm,
Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,
(Burst the wild storm! above it thou ascended'st,
And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)
Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,
As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,
(Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating
vast.)

Far, far at sea,
After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore
with wrecks,
With reappearing day as now so happy and serene,
The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,
The limpid spread of air cerulean,
Thou also reappearest.

Thou born to match the gale (thou art all wings),
To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurri-
cane,
Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,
Days, even weeks untired and onward, through
spaces, realms gyrating,

At dusk that look'st on Senegal, at morn America,
That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-
cloud,
In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,
What joys! what joys were thine!

WALT WHITMAN.

THE NIGHT BIRD

A MYTH.

A FLOATING, a floating
Across the sleeping sea,
All night I heard a singing bird
Upon the topmost tree.

'Oh came you off the isles of Greece,
Or off the banks of Seine;
Or off some tree in forests free,
Which fringe the western main?'

'I came not off the old world
Nor yet from off the new—
But I am one of the birds of God
Which sing the whole night through.'

'Oh sing, and wake the dawning—
Oh whistle for the wind;
The night is long, the current strong,
My boat it lags behind.'

'The current sweeps the old world,
The current sweeps the new;
The wind will blow, the dawn will glow
Ere thou hast sailed them through.'

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

From "ISEULT AT TINTAGEL"

As the sea loves a sea-bird loved he me,
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,
And bounteously beneath me spread forth spring,
A springtide space whereon to float or fly,
A world of happy water, whence the sky
Glowed goodlier, lightening from so glad a glass,
Than with its own light only. . . .

SWINBURNE.

From "THE MAIDEN MARRIAGE"

AND as the sea-gull hovers high, and turns
With eyes wherein the keen heart glittering yearns
Down toward the sweet green sea whereon the
broad noon burns,
And suddenly, soul-stricken with delight,
Drops, and the glad wave gladdens, and the light
Sees wing and wave confuse their fluttering white,
So Tristram one brief breathing-space apart
Hung, and gazed down. . .

SWINBURNE.

From "AT A MONTH'S END"

ACROSS, aslant, a scudding sea-mew
Swam, dipped, and dropped, and grazed the
sea:
And one with me I could not dream you;
And one with you I could not be.

As the white wing the white waves fringes
  Touched and slid over and flashed past—
As a pale cloud a pale flame tinges
  From the moon's lowest light and last—

. . . .
. . . .

So once with fiery breath and flying
  Your winged heart touched mine and went,
And the swift spirits kissed, and sighing,
  Sundered and smiled and were content.

SWINBURNE.

From "MY BEAUTIFUL LADY"

. . . .

A HAWK high poised in air, whose nerved wing-tips
Tremble with might suppressed, before he dips,
  In vigilance, hangs less intense
  Than I; when her voice holds my sense
    Contented in suspense.

THOMAS WOOLNER, R.A.

From "TALES OF THE HALL"

(BOOK IV.)

PLEASANT it was to view the sea-gulls strive
Against the storm, or in the ocean dive,
With eager scream, or when they dropping gave
Their closing wings, to sail upon the wave;
Then as the winds and waters raged around,
And breaking billows mix'd their deafening sound,
They on the rolling deep securely hung,
And calmly rode the restless waves among.

CRABBE.

FRAGMENT FROM A SONG

"BELOVED the fertile Drumhome,
Beloved are Sorgs and Kells!
But sweeter and fairer to me
The salt sea where the sea-gulls cry
When I come to Derry from far,
It is sweeter and dearer to me—
Sweeter to me."

SAINT COLUMBA.

From

"ON THE VIEW FROM ST. LEONARDS"

Ev'n gladly I exchange yon spring-green lanes
With all the darling field-flowers in their prime,
And gardens haunted by the nightingale's
Long trills and gushing ecstasies of song,
For these wild headlands, and the sea-mew's clang.

CAMPBELL.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

Castor and Pollux, who thought not to rest—
In woody Lacedæmon, where the doves
Make summer music in the beechen groves,
But rather chose to hear the sea-fowl sing.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "THE SEA-MEW"

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A forward shade, the only one,
(But shadows ever man pursue.)

II.

Familiar with the waves and free,
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky,
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul, God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder!

V.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;
And when earth's dew around him lay,
He thought of ocean's winged spray,
And his eye waxëd sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
A prison, with their darksome shade:
And drooped his wing, and mournëd he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move,
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky,
That hath no waves!) because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

A DEAD SEA-GULL

NEAR LIVERPOOL.

LACK-LUSTRE eye, and idle wing,
And smirchèd breast that skims no more,
White as the foam itself, the wave—
Hast thou not even a grave
Upon the dreary shore,
Forlorn, forsaken thing?

Thou whom the deep seas could not drown,
Nor all the elements affright,
Flashing like thought across the main,
Mocking the hurricane,
Screaming with shrill delight
When the great ship went down.

Thee not thy beauty saved, nor mirth,
Nor daring, nor thy humble lot,
One among thousands—in quick haste
Fate clutched thee as she passed;
Dead—how, it matters not:
Corrupting, earth to earth.

And not a league from where it lies
Lie bodies once as free from stain,
And hearts as gay as this sea-bird's,
Whom all the preachers' words
Will ne'er make white again,
Or from the dead to rise.

Rot, pretty bird, in harmless clay:
We sing too much poetic woes;
Let us be doing while we can:
Blessèd the Christian man
Who on life's shore seeks those
Dying of soul decay.

THE AUTHOR OF
JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.

ON A RING-PLOVER FOUND DEAD IN TYREE

AUGUST, 1884.

IN a hollow of the dunes
  Its wings were closed in rest,
And the florets of the eyebright
  Stood guard around its breast.

The glorious light and sun
  Were on it where it lay,
And the sound of ocean murmurs
  Passed o'er it from the bay.

No more its easy pinions
  Would gleam along the sand,
No more in glancing courses
  Sweep all the pleasant land.

No more its tuneful whistle
  Would mingle with the surf;
Its busy feet were idle,
  Once nimble on the turf.

No ruffle marred its plumage,
   No struggle stretched its head;
It lay in perfect slumber,
   The happiest of the dead.

So could I wish that Death
   Would make his lair for me
Among the list'ning pastures
   And margins of the sea.

THE DUKE OF ARGYLL.
(*From "Good Words," January* 1885.)

From "HIAWATHA"

Then he heard a clang and flapping,
As of many wings assembling,
Heard a screaming and confusion,
As of birds of prey contending,
Saw a gleam of light above him,
Shining through the ribs of Nahma,
Saw the glittering eyes of sea-gulls,
Of Kayoshk, the sea-gulls, peering,
Gazing at him through the opening,
Heard them saying to each other,
"'Tis our brother, Hiawatha!"
And he shouted from below them,

Cried exulting from the caverns,
"O ye sea-gulls! O my brothers!
I have slain the sturgeon, Nahma:
Make the rifts a little larger,
With your claws the openings widen,
Set me free from this dark prison.
And henceforward and for ever
Men shall speak of your achievements,
Calling you Kayoshk, the sea-gulls,
Yes, Kayoshk, the Noble Scratchers!"

And the wild and clamorous sea-gulls
Toiled with beak and claws together,
Made the rifts and openings wider
In the mighty ribs of Nahma,
And from peril and from prison,
From the body of the sturgeon,
From the peril of the water,
Was released my Hiawatha.

LONGFELLOW.

From "IONA"

O'ER tangled and shell-paved rocks
The white sea-gulls are flying;
And in the sunny coves brown flocks
Of wistful seals are lying;

The waves are breaking low,
Hardly their foam you trace;
All hushed and still, as if they know
This is a sacred place.

WALTER C. SMITH.

From "FLORA MACDONALD'S FAREWELL"

THE muircock that craws on the brows of Ben-Connal,
He kens of his bed in a sweet mossy hame,
The eagle that soars o'er the cliffs of Clan-Ronald,
Unawed and unhunted, his eyry can claim;
The solan can sleep on the shelve of the shore,
The cormorant roost on his rock of the sea.
But ah! there is one whose hard fate I deplore,
Nor house, ha', nor hame, in this country has he—
The conflict is past, and our name is no more—
There's nought left but sorrow for Scotland and me!

HOGG.

From "BY THE NORTH SEA"

THE pastures are herdless and sheepless,
  No pasture or shelter for herds:
The wind is relentless and sleepless,
  And restless and songless the birds;
Their cries from afar fall breathless.
  Their wings are as lightnings that flee;
For the land has two lords that are deathless:
      Death's self, and the sea.

. . . . . .
. . . . .
. . . . . .

As the souls of the dead men disburdened
  And clean of the sins that they sinned,
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned
  And delight as a wave's in the wind,
And delight as the wind's in the billow,
  Birds pass, and deride with their glee
The flesh that has dust for its pillow
      As wrecks have the sea.

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,
  Wings flash through the dusk like beams;
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,
  The bird in the graveyard gleams;

As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,
The graves that the bird's note brightens
Grow bright for the bird.

SWINBURNE.

From "OVER THE HILLSIDE"

(*Reichip*, 1864.)

. . . . . .

WITHIN the unknown country
Where some lost footsteps pass,
What beauty decks the heavens
And clothes the grass!

Over the mountain shoulder
What glories may unfold!
Though I see but the mountain
Bleak, bare and cold,—

And the pale road, slow winding
To where, each after each,
They slipped away—ah, whither?
I cannot reach.

And if I call, what answers?
  Only 'twixt earth and sky,
Like wail of parting spirit,
  The curlew's cry. . . .

THE AUTHOR OF
JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN.

From "HEAVEN AND EARTH"

Noah. Hark, hark! the sea-birds cry!
In clouds they overspread the lurid sky,
And hover round the mountain, where before
Never a white wing, wetted by the wave,
  Yet dared to soar,
Even when the waters wax'd too fierce to brave.
Soon it shall be their only shore,
  And then, no more!

BYRON.

IX.

MOUNTAINS — EAGLES — AFTERNOON — EVENING

From "KILMAHOE"

ALL along these jaggèd heights
Many are the wild delights,
Goats, that grass on scant ledge crop,
Or poise them on some skiey top;
Marten-cat, up smooth rock-face
Climbing to his crannied place;
Falcons paired, that wheel and wheel
High o'er splintered pinnacle;—
Sights to feed the children's eyes
With an ever new surprise.
Now they seaward gaze—for spring
Hath unloosed the gannet's wing,
And sent them to their hunting grounds
There to wheel unwearied rounds.
Sudden as a lightning flash,
Falling sheer, one cleaves the main;
One with heavy-pinioned plash
On the weltering surge again
Re-appears, and, flapping wings,
Gulps his prey, and skyward springs
Buoyant to his own domain.

J. C. SHAIRP.

From "ROKEBY"

ON Brignall cliffs and Scargill brake
The owlet's homilies awake,
The bittern scream'd from rush and flag,
The raven slumber'd on his crag,
Forth from his den the otter drew,—
Grayling and trout their tyrant knew,
As between reed and sedge he peers,
With fierce round snout and sharpen'd ears,
Or, prowling by the moonbeam cool,
Watches the stream or swims the pool,
Perch'd on his wonted eyrie high,
Sleep seal'd the tercelet's wearied eye,
That all the day had watch'd so well
The cushat dart across the dell.

SCOTT.

From "CHAMOUNI"

. . . this peak, like a grey pinnacle
Of the towered earth piercing the cloudless skies.
To us, how calm and lonely, tenantless
And silent as the still and empty air,
But to that height the seldom mountaineer
Looks from the extremest footing of some ridge
Incredible, three times beyond our ken,
And to his keen and upward-straining eyes
Round it midway the circling eagles sail,
As daws that round some thin and distant spire
On English hill, scarce seen thro' lucent air,
Are motes in the evening sun.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "BALDER"

LIKE a sailing eagle old
Which with unwavering wings outspread and wide
Makes calm horizons in the slumbrous air
Of cloudless noon and fills the silent heaven

With the slow circulation of a course
More placid than repose, this shining still
And universal day revolves serene
Around me, hasting not and uncompelled.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "THE LADY OF THE LAKE"

SUCH glance the mountain eagle threw,
As, from the cliffs of Benvenue,
She spread her dark sails on the wind,
And, high in middle heaven, reclined,
With her broad shadow on the lake,
Silenced the warblers of the brake.

SCOTT.

From "THE DEATH OF MOSES"

HEAVEN led the people forth.
E'en as the eagle's parent care
Hangs o'er the lofty nest,



There might men the royal Egle find
That with his sharp look perceth the Sunne
CHAUCER

And flutters fondly o'er her young,
  And spreads her guardian wings,
And leads them from the eyry forth,
  And bids them face the sun

SOUTHEY.

From "LOVE'S LABOUR LOST"

ACT IV SCENE III

A LOVER'S eyes will gaze an eagle blind

SHAKESPEARE.

From "PIETRO OF ABANO"

. . . SHELL chipped, the eaglet callow
Needs a parent's pinion push to quit the eyrie's edge
But once fairly launched forth, denizen of æther,
While each effort sunward bids the blood more freely through each limb pulse,
Sure the parent feels, as gay they soar together,
Fully are all pains repaid when love redeems its pledge!

BROWNING

From "TITUS ANDRONICUS"

ACT IV. SCENE IV.

Tamora. . . . . .

THE eagle suffers little birds to sing,
And is not careful what they mean thereby;
Knowing that with the shadow of his wing
He can at pleasure stint their melody.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE VOICES"

THE mountain pine looks calmly on
 The fires that scourge the plains below,
Nor heeds the eagle in the sun
 The small birds piping in the snow!

WHITTIER.

From "THE CHURCH"

Each creature has a wisdome for his good.
The pigeons feed their tender off-spring, crying,
When they are callow; but withdraw their food,
When they are fledged, that need may teach
them flying.

GEORGE HERBERT.

From "THE SPANISH GYPSY"

Lay the young eagle in what nest you will,
The cry and swoop of eagles overhead
Vibrate prophetic in its kindred frame,
And make it spread its wings and poise itself
For the eagle's flight.

GEORGE ELIOT.

From "THE CLOUD"

. . . . . .

THE sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead:
As on the jag of a mountain crag
Which an earthquake rocks and swings
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And, when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest on mine airy nest
As still as a brooding dove.

SHELLEY.

From "ALASTOR"

As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates,
Through night and day, tempest and calm and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aery wilderness: thus, driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moonlight snake,
He fled.

SHELLEY.

From "ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS"

So the struck eagle, stretch'd upon the plain,
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
View'd his own feather on the fatal dart,
And wing'd the shaft that quiver'd in his heart:

Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel,
He nurs'd the pinion which impell'd the steel;
While the same plumage that had warm'd his nest,
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast.

BYRON.

From "BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE"

And we were just about
To turn and face the foe, as some tired bird
Barbarians pelt at, drive with shouts away
From shelter in what rocks, however rude,
She makes for, to escape the kindled eye,
Split beak, crook'd claw o' the creature, cormorant
Or ossifrage, that, hardly baffled, hangs
Afloat i' the foam, to take her if she turn.

. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Like some dread heapy blackness, ruffled wing,
Convulsed and cowering head that is all eye,
Which proves a ruined eagle who, too blind
Swooping in quest o' the quarry, fawn or kid,
Descried deep down the chasm 'twixt rock and rock,
Has wedged and mortised, into either wall
O' the mountain, the pent earthquake of his power;

So lies, half hurtless, yet still terrible,
Just when who stalks up, who stands front to front,
But the great lion-guarder of the gorge,
Lord of the ground, a stationed glory there!
Yet he too pauses ere he try the worst
O' the frightful unfamiliar nature, new
To the chasm, indeed, but elsewhere known enough,
Among the shadows and the silences
Above i' the sky: so, each antagonist
Silently faced his fellow and forbore.

BROWNING.

From "THE DEAD EAGLE"

WRITTEN AT ORAN.

. . . . . .

THERE'S such a charm in natural strength and power,
That human fancy has for ever paid
Poetic homage to the bird of Jove.
Hence, 'neath his image, Rome array'd her turms
And cohorts for the conquest of the world.
And figuring his flight, the mind is fill'd
With thoughts that mock the pride of wingless man. . . .

CAMPBELL.

From "JULIUS CÆSAR"

ACT V. SCENE I.

Cassius. . . . Now I change my mind,
And partly credit those that do presage.
Coming from Sardis, on our former ensign
Two mighty eagles fell; and there they perch'd,
Gorging and feeding from our soldiers' hands;
Who to Philippi here consorted us:
This morning are they fled away and gone;
And in their stead do ravens, crows, and kites,
Fly o'er our heads, and downward look on us,
As we were sickly prey: their shadows seem
A canopy most fatal, under which
Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "SIR ALDINGAR"

(TIME OF HENRY II.)

"I DREAMT in my sweven on Thursday eve
  In my bed wheras I lay
I dreamt a grype[1] and a grimly beast
  Had carried my crown away;

"My gorget and my kirtle of gold,
  And all my fair head-gear;
And he would worry me with his tush,[2]
  And to his nest y-bear:

"Saving there came a little gray hawk,
  A merlin him they call,
Which until the ground did strike the grype,
  That dead he down did fall."

THE HYMN OF THE EAGLE

UPON a sheer-sloped mountain height
My eyrie is: from thence my sight
Looks down o'er the wide lands below:
I watch the wild winds swoop and blow

[1] Griffin. [2] Tusk.

In savage violence—but here
They howl in vain; I have no fear
Who am the lord of this high sphere.

At sunrise on this peak I stand,
And watch the glory flood the land;
And then on mighty wings I speed
Far hence for lowland prey to feed
My clamorous young—though when night falls
Still echo loud their fledgling calls
About these gloomy mountain walls.

I watch the moon rise o'er the sea
And inland sail mysteriously,
A globe of silver fire on high;
Then pulse the planets in the sky,
And flash the stars, and meteors stream:
And then I drowse, to wake with dream
Of prey, and thro' the stillness scream.

WILLIAM SHARP.

From "FERISHTAH'S FANCIES"

I. THE EAGLE.

DERVISH—(though yet un-dervished, call him so
No less beforehand: while he trudged our way,
Other his worldly name was: when he wrote
Those versicles we Persians praise him for,
—True fairy-work—Ferishtah grew his style)—
Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,
And noted on a bough a raven's nest,
Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak
Widened by want; for why? beneath the tree
Dead lay the mother bird. "A piteous chance!
How shall they 'scape destruction?" sighed the sage
—Or sage about to be, though simple still.
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped
An eagle downward, and behold he bore
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith
He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.
"Ah, foolish, faithless me!" the observer smiled,
"Who toil and moil to eke out life, when lo
Providence cares for every hungry mouth!"
To profit by which lesson, home went he,
And certain days sat musing,—neither meat

Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.
Then,—for his head swam and his limbs grew
faint,—
Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream
God thus admonished: "Hast thou marked my
deed?
Which part assigned by providence dost judge
Was meant for man's example? Should he play
The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength
That captures prey and saves the perishing?
Sluggard, arise: work, eat, then feed who lack!"

Waking, "I have arisen, work I will,
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,
Body or soul in me? I starve in soul:
So may mankind: and since men congregate
In towns, not woods,—to Ispahan forthwith!"

BROWNING.

From "PARADISE AND THE PERI"

THENCE, over Egypt's palmy groves,
Her grots, and sepulchres of kings
The exiled Spirit sighing roves;
And now hangs listening to the doves
In warm Rosetta's vale—now loves
To watch the moonlight on the wings

Of the white pelicans that break
The azure calm of Mœris' Lake.
'Twas a fair scene—a land more bright
Never did mortal eye behold!

. . . . . .

Amid whose fairy loneliness
Nought but the lapwing's cry is heard.
Nought seen but (when the shadows, flitting
Fast from the moon, unsheath its gleam)
Some purple-wing'd Sultana[1] sitting
Upon a column, motionless
And glittering, like an idol bird!

MOORE.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

. . . javelins, that fly
Enwreathed with smoky flames through the dark sky
And red-hot globes that, opening as they mount,
Discharge, as from a kindled naphtha fount,
Showers of consuming fire o'er all below;
Looking, as through th' illumined night they go,
Like those wild birds that by the Magians oft,
At festivals of fire, were sent aloft
Into the air, with blazing faggots tied
To their huge wings, scattering combustion wide!

MOORE.

[1] A stately and brilliant bird.

From "THE BOTHIE OF TOBER-NA-VUOLICH"

. . . like to hawk of the hill which ranges and
soars in its hunting,
Seen and unseen by turns, now here, now in ether
eludent,
Wherefore, as cloud of Benmore or hawk over-
ranging the mountains,
. . . . . .
Wandereth he. . . .

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

From "MARMION"

"Let the wild falcon soar her swing,
She'll stoop when she has tired her wing."

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

From "PAULINE"

. . . I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
Who crieth as it flies, for perfect joy.

BROWNING.

From "PAULINE"

AND I was borne away,
As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
O'er deserts, towers, and forests. . . .

BROWNING.

From "THE FIRE-WORSHIPPERS"

A ROCKY mountain, o'er the Sea
Of Oman beetling awfully,

. . . . . .

While, on its peak, that braved the sky,

A ruin'd temple tower'd so high
  That oft the sleeping albatross[1]
Struck the wild ruins with her wing,
And from her cloud-rock'd slumbering
Started—to find man's dwelling ther
In her own silent fields of air!

MOORE.

From "THE LIGHTHOUSE"

THE sea-bird wheeling round it, with the din
  Of wings and winds and solitary cries,
Blinded and maddened by the light within,
  Dashes himself against the glare, and dies.

LONGFELLOW.

From "AMOUR DE VOYAGE"

CANTO III.

IV. CLAUDE TO EUSTACE.

AH, but ye that extrude from the ocean your helpless faces,
Ye over stormy seas leading long and dreary processions,

[1] They sleep in the air.

Ye, too, brood of the wind, whose coming is
whence we discern not,
Making your nest on the wave, and your bed on
the crested billow,
Skimming rough waters, and crowding wet sands
that the tide shall return to,
Cormorants, ducks, and gulls, fill ye my imagi-
nation!
Let us not talk of growth, we are still in our
Aqueous Ages.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

From "PROMETHEIA"

For this, from Zeus I craved,
What he denies me still, the gift of wings—
For birds—birds only—that in some sweet bird
Life's sweetest voice, from Earth's loud hubbub
saved,
Might soar in song to Heaven, and there be heard.

ROBERT, EARL OF LYTTON.

From

"LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP"

Ay, and sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate
down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow
cast before;
And the river running under; and across it, from
the rowans,
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the
air it bore.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From

"LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP"

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if
she always thought them—
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on
branch,

Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way
besought them,
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in
the grange.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "TO JANE—THE RECOLLECTION"

How calm it was!—The silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller with her sound
The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.

SHELLEY.

From "A VISION OF POETS"

. . . . and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "POEMS BY A PAINTER"

STILL, where the slanting sunlight gilds
The boles of cedar and of pine,
Chants the lone blackbird from the brake
With melancholy voice divine.

SIR NOEL PATON.

From "OLRIG GRANGE"

LOOK, how the slanting sunbeams long
Gird with light-rings the grey birch trees ;
And from his unseen place of song
The sky-lark on the evening breeze
Shakes down his fluttering melodies. . .

WALTER C. SMITH.

From "AN EVENING WALK"

Sweetly ferocious, round his native walks,
Pride of his sister wives, the monarch stalks;
Spur-clad his nervous feet, and firm his tread;
A crest of purple tops his warrior head.
Bright sparks his black and rolling eyeball hurls
Afar, his tail he closes and unfurls;
On tiptoe reared, he strains his clarion throat,
Threatened by faintly answering farms remote.

WORDSWORTH.

From "AN EVENING WALK"

Now, while the solemn evening shadows sail,
On red slow-waving pinions, down the vale:
How pleasant near the tranquil lake to stray
Where winds a road along a secret bay,
In all the majesty of ease divides,
And glorying looks around the silent tides;
Along the "wild meandering shore" to view,
Obsequious grace the winding swan pursue;

He swells his lifted chest and backward flings
His bridling neck between his towering wings;
By rills that tumble down the woody steeps,
And run in transports to the dimpling deeps;
On as he floats, the silvered waters glow,
Proud of the varying arch and moveless form of snow,
While tender cares and mild domestic loves
With furtive watch pursue her as she moves,
The female with a meeker charm succeeds,
And her brown little ones around her leads,
Nibbling the water-lilies as they pass,
Or playing wanton with the floating grass.
She, in a mother's care, her beauty's pride
Forgets, unwearied watching every side;
She calls them near, and with affection sweet,
Alternately relieves their weary feet.
Alternately they mount her back, and rest,
Close by her mantling wings' embraces pressed.

WORDSWORTH.

From "GARETH AND LYNETTE"

NIGH upon that hour
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool.

TENNYSON.

From "KILMENY"

AND when at eve the woodlands rung,
When hymns of other worlds she sung
In ecstasy of sweet devotion,
O, then the glen was all in motion!
The wild beasts of the forest came,
Broke from their boughts and faulds the tame,
And goved around, charmed and amazed;
Even the dull cattle crooned and gazed,
And murmured and looked with anxious pain
For something the mystery to explain.
The buzzard came with the throstle-cock;
The corby left her houf in the rock;

The blackbird alang wi' the eagle flew;
The hind came tripping o'er the dew;
The wolf and the kid their raike began,
And the tod, and the lamb, and the leveret
ran;
The hawk and the hern attour them hung,
And the merle and the mavis forhooyed[1] their
young;
And all in a peaceful ring were hurled:—
It was like an eve in a sinless world!

HOGG.

From "THE BIRDS"

SONG.

(The Hoopoe calls the Nightingale.)

AWAKE! Awake!
Sleep no more, my gentle mate!
With your tiny tawny bill,
Wake the tuneful echo shrill,
On vale or hill;
Or in her airy rocky seat,
Let her listen and repeat

[1] Forsook.

The tender ditty that you tell,
The sad lament,
The dire event,
To luckless Itys that befell.
Thence the strain
Shall rise again,
And soar amain,
Up to the lofty palace gate,
Where mighty Apollo sits in state
In Jove's abode, with his ivory lyre,
Hymning aloud to the heavenly quire;
While all the Gods shall join with thee
In a celestial symphony.

ARISTOPHANES,
Translated by JOHN HOOKHAM FRERE.

THE HOOPOE'S INVOCATION TO THE NIGHTINGALE

(From "The Birds" of Aristophanes, I. 209.)

WAKEN, dear one, from thy slumbers;
Pour again those holy numbers,
Which thou warblest there alone
In a heaven-inſtructed tone,

Mourning from this leafy shrine
Lost—lost Itys, mine and thine,
In the melancholy cry
Of a mother's agony.
Echo, ere the murmurs fade,
Bear them from the yew tree's shade
To the throne of Jove; and there,
Phœbus with his golden hair
Listens long, and loves to suit
To his ivory-mounted lute
Thy sad music; at the sound
All the gods come dancing round,
And a sympathetic song
Peals from the immortal throng.

W. M. PRAED.

SUNSET WINGS

To-night this sunset spreads two golden wings
Cleaving the western sky;
Winged too with wind it is, and winnowings
Of birds; as if the day's last hour in rings
Of strenuous flight must die.

Sun-steeped in fire, the homeward pinions sway
Above the dovecote-tops;
And clouds of starlings, ere they rest with day,
Sink, clamorous like mill-waters, at wild play,
By turns in every copse:

Each tree heart-deep the wrangling rout receives,—
Save for the whirr within,
You could not tell the starlings from the leaves;
Then one great puff of wings, and the swarm heaves
Away with all its din.

Even thus Hope's hours, in ever-eddying flight,
To many a refuge tend;
With the first light she laughed, and the last light
Glows round her still; who natheless in the night
At length must make an end.

And now the mustering rooks innumerable
Together sail and soar,
While for the day's death, like a tolling knell,
Unto the heart they seem to cry, Farewell,
No more, farewell, no more!

Is Hope not plumed, as 'twere a fiery dart?
And oh! thou dying day.
Even as thou goest must she too depart,
And Sorrow fold such pinions on the heart
As will not fly away?

D. G. ROSSETTI.

"TWILIGHT CALM"

Oh, pleasant eventide!
Clouds on the western side
Grow grey and greyer, hiding the warm sun:
The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
The stock-doves sit and brood:
The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough
But lazily; pauses; and settles now
Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,
Lily and dewy rose
Shutting their tender petals from the moon:
The grasshoppers are still; but not so soon
Are still the noisy crows.

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad lime;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home:
From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-less snail
Comes forth, clammy and bare.

Hark! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young:
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain
The passion of her strain;
And yet we little understand or know:
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein?

In separate herds the deer
Lie; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the fawn:
Through all the hours of night until the dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

The hare sleeps where it lies,
With wary half-closed eyes;
The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to cluck:
Only the fox is out, some heedless duck
Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly: how the dews fall damp!
While close at hand the glow-worm lights her lamp,
Or twinkles from afar.

But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East:
For night has come; and the great calm has ceased,
The quiet sands have run.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

From "JOAN OF ARC"

'Twas now the hour
When o'er the plain the pensive hues of eve
Shed their meek radiance; when the lowing herd,
Slow as they stalk to shelter, draw behind
The lengthening shades; and seeking his high nest
As heavily he flaps the dewy air,
The hoarse rook pours his not unpleasing note.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

X.

EVENING—NIGHT

From "BALDER"

In the spring twilight, in the coloured twilight,
Whereto the latter primroses are stars,
And early nightingale
Letteth her love adown the tender wind,
That thro' the eglantine
In mixed delight the fragrant music bloweth
On to me,
Where in the twilight, in the coloured twilight,
I sit beside the thorn upon the hill.
The mavis sings upon the old oak tree
Sweet and strong.
Strong and sweet,
Soft, sweet, and strong,
And with his voice interpreteth the silence
Of the dim vale when Philomel is mute!
The dew lies like a light upon the grass,
The cloud is as a swan upon the sky,
The mist is as a brideweed on the moon.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "TO THE SETTING SUN"

STAY, O sweet day, nor fleet so fast away;
For now it is that life revives again,
As the red tyrant sinks beneath the hill:
And now soft dews refresh the arid plain;
And now the fair bird's voice begins to thrill,
With hidden dolours making sweet her strain,
And wakes the woods that all day were so still.

LEWIS MORRIS.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

. . . . .

WHILE now the sun had sunk behind the hill,
And from a white-thorn nigh a thrush did fill
The balmy air with echoing minstrelsy,
And cool the night-wind blew across the sea,
And round about the soft-winged bats did sweep.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD"

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

GRAY.

From "HE HEARD HER SING"

And a certain copse we knew, where never in Maytime fails,
While the night distils sweet dew, the song of the nightingales:

And there together we heard the lyrical drama of
love
Of the wonderful passionate bird which swelleth
the heart so above
All other thought of this life, all other care, of this
earth,
Be it of pleasure or strife, be it of sorrow or mirth,
Saving the one intense imperious passion supreme,
Kindling the soul and the sense, making the world
but a dream,
The dream of an aching delight and a yearning
afar and afar,
While the music thrills all the void night to the
loftiest pulsating star :—
" Love, love only, for ever; love with its torture
and bliss;
All the world's glories can never equal two souls
in one kiss."

JAMES THOMSON.

From "PRINCE ATHANASE"

PART II.

O SUMMER eve! with power divine, bestowing

On thine own bird the sweet enthusiasm
Which overflows in notes of liquid gladness,
Filling the sky like light! How many a spasm

Of fevered brains oppressed with grief and madness
Were lulled by thee, delightful nightingale!

SHELLEY.

From "THE SENSITIVE PLANT"

PART I.

(ONLY overhead the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its elysian chant
Were mixed with the dream of the Sensitive Plant.)

SHELLEY.

From "THE AZIOLA"

SAD Aziola! many an eventide
Thy music I had heard
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
And fields and marshes wide,—
Such as nor voice nor lute nor wind nor bird
The soul ever stirred;
Unlike and far sweeter than they all.
Sad Aziola! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

SHELLEY.

From "THE PILGRIMS OF THE SUN"

THE night wind is still, and the moon in the wane,
The river-lark sings on the verge of the plain;
So lonely his plaint by the motionless reed
It sounds like an omen or tale of the dead;
Like a warning of death it falls on the ear
Of those who are wandering the woodlands in fear.

HOGG.

From "SPINDRIFT'

WHILE the white-owl flitted, the beetle whirred,
And Hesper blazed o'er the shadowy Ben,
And the curlew's wail from the shore was heard,
And the mist came creeping down the glen.

SIR NOËL PATON

From "SPINDRIFT"

At length a bird
Far in the odorous cedar-gloom burst forth
In sudden song, that through the aching hush
Pulsed for two troubled heart-beats, and then died,
Leaving its echoes all about the dells.

SIR NOËL PATON.

From "POEMS BY A PAINTER"

Where sits the nightingale on hawthorn spray,
Witching the dark with lovelorn roundelay,
That echoes far the bosky vistas through,
With sweet reverberations ever new.

SIR NOLL PATON.

From "HERO AND LEANDER"

A nightingale, in transport, seem'd to fling
His warble out, and then sit listening.

LEIGH HUNT.

From "EVANGELINE"

II.

Then from a neighbouring thicket the mocking-bird, wildest of singers,
Swinging aloft on a willow spray that hung o'er the water,

Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious
music,
That the whole air and the woods and the waves
seemed silent to listen.
Plaintive at first were the tones and sad; then
soaring to madness
Seemed they to follow or guide the revel of frenzied
Bacchantes.
Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low
lamentation;
Till, having gathered them all, he flung them
abroad in derision,
As when, after a storm, a gust of wind through the
tree-tops
Shakes down the rattling rain in a crystal shower
on the branches.

LONGFELLOW.

From "IL PENSEROSO"

AND the mute silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,
Gently o'er the accustom'd oak:

Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chantress, oft the woods among
I woo to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar.

MILTON.

From "PARADISE LOST"

——To the nuptial bower
I led her blushing like the morn: all heaven,
And happy constellations, on that hour
Shed their selectest influence; the earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill;
Joyous the birds; fresh gales and gentle airs



Nor then the solemn Nightingale
Ceased warbling, but all night tuned her soft lays
MILTON

Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their wings
Flung rose, flung odours from the spicy shrub,
Disporting, till the amorous bird of night
Sung spousal, and bid haste the evening star
On his hill top, to light the bridal lamp.

MILTON.

SONNET

TO THE NIGHTINGALE

O Nightingale, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love, O if Jove's will
Have link'd that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why·
Whether the muse or love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I

MILTON.

From "POEMS OF THE IMAGINATION"

O NIGHTINGALE! thou surely art
A creature of ebullient heart:
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou singest as if the god of wine
Had helped thee to a valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night,
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

I heard a stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day,
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come at by the breeze;
He did not cease, but cooed—and cooed:
And somewhat pensively he wooed:
He sang of love with quiet blending;
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith and inward glee;
That was the song—the song for me!

WORDSWORTH.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE

How passing sad! Listen, it sings again!
  Art thou a spirit, that amongst the boughs,
The livelong day dost chaunt that wondrous strain,
  Making wan Dian stoop her silver brows
Out of the clouds to hear thee? Who shall say,
Thou lone one! that thy melody is gay,
Let him come listen now to that one note,
  That thou art pouring o'er and o'er again
Thro' the sweet echoes of thy mellow throat,
  With such a sobbing sound of deep, deep pain.
I prithee cease thy song! for from my heart
Thou hast made memory's bitter waters start,
  And filled my weary eyes with the soul's rain.

FRANCES ANNE BUTLER.

From "THE NIGHTINGALE"

A CONVERSATION POEM. APRIL 1798.

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues
Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge!

You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,
But hear no murmuring: it flows silently
O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,
A balmy night! and though the stars be dim,
Yet let us think upon the vernal showers
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.
And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
"Most musical, most melancholy" bird![1]
A melancholy bird! Oh! idle thought!
In Nature there is nothing melancholy.
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong,
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,
(And so, poor wretch! filled all things with himself,
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,
First named these notes a melancholy strain.
And many a poet echoes the conceit;
Poet who hath been building up the rhyme
When he had better far have stretched his limbs
Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell,
By sun or moon-light, to the influxes
Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements
Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song
And of his fame forgetful! so his fame

[1] Milton.

Should share in Nature's immortality,
A venerable thing! and so his song
Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself
Be loved like Nature! But 'twill not be so;
And youths and maidens most poetical,
Who lose the deepening twilights of the spring
In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still
Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs
O'er Philomela's pity pleading strains.

My Friend, and thou, our Sister! we have learn
A different lore: we may not thus profane
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love
And joyance! 'Tis the merry Nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music!

And I know a grove
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabits not; and so
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.
But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales; and far and near,

In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,
They answer and provoke each other's song,
With skirmish and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—
Stirring the air with such a harmony,
That should you close your eyes, you might almost
Forget it was not day! On moon-lit bushes,
Whose dewy leaflets are but half disclosed,
You may perchance behold them on the twigs,
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,
Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade
Lights up her love-torch.

S. T. COLERIDGE.

CERTAINE SONNETS

(3)

The nightingale, as soon as Aprill bringeth
Unto her rested sense a perfect waking,
While late bare earth, proud of new clothing, springeth.
Sings out her woes, a thorne her song-booke making,

And mournfully bewailing,
Her throat in tunes expresseth
What griefe her breast oppresseth
For Thereus' force on her chaste will prevailing.
O Philomela faire, O take some gladnesse,
That here is juster cause of plaintfull sadnesse:
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth;
Thy thorne without, my thorne my heart invadeth.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

From

"LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP"

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

As when through half-shut casements the brown bird
We hearken when the night is come in June,
And thick-leaved woods are 'twixt us and his tune.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

ROSES AND THE NIGHTINGALE

In my garden it is night-time,
But a still time and a bright time ;
For the moon rains down her splendour.
 And my garden feels the wonder
 Of the spell which it lies under
In that light so soft and tender.

While the moon her watch is keeping,
All the Blossoms here are sleeping.
And the Roses sigh for dreaming
 Of the bees that love to love them
 When the warm sun shines above them,
And the butterflies pass gleaming.

Could one follow Roses' fancies
When the night the garden trances,
Oh, what fair things we should chance on!
  For to Lilies and to Roses,
  As to us, soft sleep discloses
What the waking may not glance on.

But hark! now across the moonlight,
Through the warmness of the June night,
From the tall Trees' listening branches,
  Comes the sound, sustained and holy,
  Of the passionate melancholy,
Of a wound which singing stanches.

Oh, the ecstasy of sorrow
Which the music seems to borrow
From the thought of some past lover
  Who loved vainly all his lifetime,
  Till death ended peace and strife-time,
And the darkness clothed him over!

Oh, the passionate, sweet singing,
Aching, gushing, throbbing, ringing,
Dying in divine, soft closes,
  Recommencing, waxing stronger,
  Sweet notes, ever sweeter, longer,
Till the singing wakes the Roses!

Quoth the Roses to the Singer:
"Oh, thou dearest music-bringer,
Now our sleep so sweetly endeth,
  Tell us why *thy* song so sad seems,
  When the air is full of glad dreams,
And the bright moon o'er us bendeth."

Sang the Singer to the Roses:
"Love for you my song discloses;
Hence the note of grief it borrows."
  Quoth the Roses: "Love means pleasure."
  Quoth the Singer: "Love's best measure
Is its pure attendant sorrows."

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

From "THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS"

CANTO XXVIII.

WITHIN the place of thousand tombs
  That shine beneath, while dark above
The sad but living cypress glooms
  And withers not, though branch and leaf
Are stamp'd with an eternal grief,
  Like early unrequited Love,
One spot exists, which ever blooms,
  Ev'n in that deadly grove—

A single rose is shedding there
 Its lonely lustre, meek and pale:
It looks as planted by Despair—
 So white—so faint—the slightest gale
Might whirl the leaves on high;
 And yet, though storms and blight assail,
And hands more rude than wintry sky
 May wring it from the stem—in vain—
 To-morrow sees it bloom again:
The stalk some spirit gently rears,
And waters with celestial tears;
 For well may maids of Helle deem
That this can be no earthly flower,
Which mocks the tempest's withering hour,
And buds unshelter'd by a bower;
Nor droops though Spring refuse her shower,
 Nor woos the summer beam:
To it the livelong night there sings
 A bird unseen—but not remote:
Invisible his airy wings,
But soft as harp that Houri strings
 His long entrancing note!
It were the Bulbul; but his throat,
 Though mournful, pours not such a strain:
For they who listen cannot leave
The spot, but linger there and grieve,
 As if they loved in vain!

And yet so sweet the tears they shed,
'Tis sorrow so unmix'd with dread,
They scarce can bear the morn to break
  That melancholy spell,
And longer yet would weep and wake,
  He sings so wild and well!
But when the day-blush bursts from high
Expires that magic melody.
  And some have been who could believe
(So fondly youthful dreams deceive,
  Yet harsh be they that blame,)
That note so piercing and profound
Will shape and syllable its sound
  Into Zuleika's name.

BYRON.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

AND when she sung to her lute's touching strain,
'Twas like the notes, half ecstasy, half pain,
The bulbul utters ere her soul depart,
When, vanquished by some minstrel's powerful art,
She dies upon the lute whose sweetness broke her heart.

MOORE.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

OH! sooner shall the rose of May
  Mistake her own sweet nightingale,
And to some meaner minstrel's lay
  Open her bosom's glowing veil,
Than love shall ever doubt a tone,
A breath of the belovèd one!

MOORE.

From "LALLA ROOKH"

THERE'S a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,
  And the nightingale sings round it all the day long;
In the time of my childhood 'twas like a sweet dream,
  To sit in the roses and hear the birds' song.
That bower and its music I never forget,
  But oft when alone, in the bloom of the year,
I think—is the nightingale singing there yet?
  Are the roses still bright by the calm Bendemeer?

MOORE.

XXXI. SONNET

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

SAD songstress of the night, no more I hear
Thy soften'd warblings meet my pensive ear,
As by thy wonted haunts again I rove.
Why art thou silent? Wherefore sleeps thy lay?
For faintly fades the sinking orb of day,
And yet thy music charms no more the grove.
The shrill bat flutters by; from yon dark tower
The shrieking owlet hails the shadowy hour;
Hoarse hums the beetle as he drones along,
The hour of love is flown! thy full-fledg'd brood
No longer need thy care to cull their food,
And nothing now remains to prompt the song:
But drear and sullen seems the silent grove,
No more responsive to the lay of love.

SOUTHEY.

From "TO LYCON"

Oft when my steps have trac'd the secret glade,
What time the pale moon, glimmering on the plain,
Just mark'd where deeper darkness dyed the shade,
Has contemplation lov'd the night-bird's strain:
Still have I stood, or silent mov'd and slow,
Whilst o'er the copse the thrilling accents flow,
Nor deemed the pensive bird might pour the notes of woe.

Yet sweet and lovely is the night-bird's lay,
The passing pilgrim loves her notes to hear,
When mirth's rude reign is sunk with parted day,
And silence sleeps upon the vacant ear;
For staid reflection loves the doubtful light,
When sleep and stillness lull the noiseless night,
And breathes the pensive song a soothing sad delight.

SOUTHEY.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
  My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,—
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
  One minute passed, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
  But being too happy in thy happiness,—
    That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
      In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
  Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

II.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
  Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
  Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
  Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
    With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
      And purple-stainèd mouth ;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
  And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

III.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

IV

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

V.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

VI.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

VII.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down:
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

VIII.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

KEATS.

From "ENDYMION"

O Sorrow!
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

KEATS.

From "THE EVE OF ST. AGNES"

No utter'd syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell

KEATS.

From "EARTH'S VOICES"

SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE.

KEEN, through supremest music,
My song is fill'd with pain:
Hark! 'tis the same sad strain
That with pathetic cadence thrilled
The Thracian plain,
When after Procne's flight I sang alone,
And thro' my deathless music sent a dying moan.

What moonlit glades, what seas
Foam-edged have I not known!
Through ages hath not flown
Mine ancient song with gather'd music sweet—
By fanes o'erthrown,
By cities known of old and classic woods,
And, strangely sad, in deep-leaved northern solitudes?

Nightly my song swells forth,
When the grey stock-dove broods

And whirling bat eludes
The forest boughs, and rings and pants and thrills
In passionate interludes—
Too sweet, too sad, O sorrow and old-time pain,
The love, the glory I see, that will not come again.

WILLIAM SHARP.

"SONNETS"

102.

My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in seeming;
I love not less, though less the show appear:
That love is merchandiz'd, whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.
Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
When I was wont to greet it with my lays;
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:
Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
But that wild music burthens every bough,
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
Therefore, like her, I sometimes hold my tongue,
Because I would not dull you with my song.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

ACT V. SCENE I.

Portia. The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark,
When neither is attended; and I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.
How many things by season season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection!

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

ACT IV. SCENE III.

Petruchio. . . . . .
For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich:
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honour peereth in the meanest habit.
What, is the jay more precious than the lark,
Because his feathers are more beautiful?

SHAKESPEARE.

From "PROVERBIAL WISDOM"

"BEAUTIFUL the Koil seemeth for the sweetness of
his song."

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

TO THE OWL

SAD bird of night, what sorrows call thee forth,
To vent thy plaints thus in the midnight hour?
Is it some blast that gathers in the north,
Threatening to nip the verdure of thy bower?

Is it, sad owl, that Autumn strips the shade,
And leaves thee here, unsheltered and forlorn?
Or fear that Winter will thy nest invade?
Or friendless melancholy bids thee mourn?

Shut out, lone bird, from all the feathered train,
To tell thy sorrows to the unheeding gloom;
No friend to pity when thou dost complain,
Grief all thy thought, and solitude thy home.

Sing on, sad mourner! I will bless thy strain,
And pleased in sorrow listen to thy song:
Sing on, sad mourner! to the night complain,
While the lone echo wafts thy notes along.

Is beauty less, when down the glowing cheek
Sad, piteous tears, in native sorrows fall?
Less kind the heart when anguish bids it break?
Less happy he who lists to pity's call?

Ah, no, sad Owl! nor is thy voice less sweet,
That sadness tunes it, and that grief is there;
That Spring's gay notes, unskilled, thou canst repeat;
That sorrow bids thee to the gloom repair.

Nor that the treble songsters of the day
Are quite estranged, sad bird of night! from thee;
Nor that the thrush deserts the evening spray,
When darkness calls thee from thy reverie.

From some old tower, thy melancholy dome,
While the grey walls, and desert solitudes,
Return each note, responsive to the gloom
Of ivied coverts and surrounding woods.

There hooting, I will list more pleased to thee
  Than ever lover to the nightingale;
Or drooping wretch, oppressed with misery,
  Lending his ear to some condoling tale.

BURNS.

From "WITH SA'DI IN THE GARDEN"

Mirza. Aye and to cry of yonder little owl
Who, Mirza-like, mid all your heedless notes
Hoots "hoo-hoo-hoo!"[1] as who should say "He!
    He!
The Highest! only God is Beautiful!"

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

From "HIAWATHA"

When he heard the owls at midnight,
Hooting, laughing in the forest,
"What is that?" he cried in terror;
"What is that?" he said, "Nokomis?"
And the good Nokomis answered:
"That is but the owl and owlet,

[1] Hû, *i.e.*, "He," God.

Talking in their native language,
Talking, scolding at each other."
  Then the little Hiawatha
Learned of every bird its language,
Learned their names and all their secrets,
How they built their nests in Summer,
Where they hid themselves in Winter,
Talked with them whene'er he met them,
Called them "Hiawatha's Chickens."

LONGFELLOW.

From "MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM"

ACT V. SCENE II.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
    And the wolf behowls the moon:
  Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
    All with weary task fordone.
  Now the wasted brands do glow,
    Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
  Puts the wretch that lies in woe,
    In remembrance of a shroud.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "ÆLLA"

HARK! the raven flaps his wing
In the briery dell below;
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing
To the night-mares as they go.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree!

CHATTERTON.

From "THE MISER'S MANSION"

DEEP from her dismal dwelling yells the owl,
The shrill bat flits around her dark retreat;
And the hoarse daw, when loud the tempests howl,
Screams as the wild winds shake her secret seat.

SOUTHEY.

From "THE EVE OF ST. AGNES"

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold.

KEATS.

PHILOMEL

Lo, as a minstrel at the court of Love,
The nightingale, who knows his mate is nigh,
Thrills into rapture; and the stars above
Look down, affrighted, as they would reply.
There is contagion, and I know not why,
In all this clamour, all this fierce delight,
As if the sunset, when the day did swoon,
Had drawn some wild confession from the moon.
Have wrongs been done? Have crimes enacted been
To shame the weird retirement of the night?
O clamorous bird! O sad, sweet nightingale!
Withhold thy voice, and blame not Beauty's queen.
She may be pure, though dumb: and she is pale,
And wears a radiance on her brow serene.

ERIC MACKAY.

TO A NIGHTINGALE

SWEET Bird, that sing'st away the early Hours,
Of Winters past, or coming, void of Care,
Well pleasèd with Delights which present are,
Fair seasons, budding Sprays, sweet-smelling Flow'rs.
To Rocks, to Springs, to Rills, from leavy Bow'rs,
Thou thy Creator's Goodness dost declare,
And what dear Gifts on thee he did not spare,
A Stain to human Sense in Sin that low'rs.
What Soul can be so sick, which by thy Songs
(Attir'd in sweetness) sweetly is not driven
Quite to forget Earth's Turmoils, Spites and Wrongs,
And lift a reverend Eye and Thought to Heaven?
Sweet, artless Songster, thou my Mind doest raise
To Ayres of Spheres, yea, and to Angels' Layes.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND, 1649.

From "THE LAND EAST OF THE SUN"

As slowly the short night went by,
'Midst bittern's boom and fern-owl's cry;
Then the moon sank, the stars grew pale,
And the first dawn 'gan show the veil
The night had drawn from tree to tree,
A light wind rose, and suddenly
A thrush drew head from under wing,
And through the cold dawn 'gan to sing,
And one by one about him woke
The minstrels of the feathered folk,
Long ere the first gleam of the sun.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "HYPERION"

The nightingale had ceased, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated.

KEATS.

From "THE PRINCESS"

. . . a bird,
That early woke to feed her little ones,
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light

TENNYSON.

From "THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

WITH that she murmured words of joy and love,
No louder than the grey pink-footed dove,
When at the dawn he first begins his tale,
Not knowing if he means a song or wail.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "THE FIRE-WORSHIPPERS"

THE nightingale now bends her flight
From the high trees, where all the night
She sung so sweet, with none to listen;

And hides her from the morning star
  Where thickets of pomegranate glisten
In the clear dawn,—bespangled o'er
  With dew, whose night-drops would not stain
The best and brightest scimitar
That ever youthful Sultan wore
  On the first morning of his reign!

MOORE.

From "THE PRINCE'S PROGRESS"

At the death of night and the birth of day,
When the owl left off his sober play,
And the bat hung himself out of the way,
  Woke the song of mavis and merle,
And heaven put off its hodden grey
    For mother-o'-pearl.

Peeped up daisies here and there,
Here, there, and everywhere;
Rose a hopeful lark in the air,
  Spreading out towards the sun his breast;
While the moon set solemn and fair
    Away in the West.

"Up, up, up," called the watchman lark,
In his clear réveilée: "Hearken, oh hark!
Press to the high goal, fly to the mark.
  Up, O sluggard, new morn is born;
If still asleep when the night falls dark,
    Thou must wait a second morn."

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

BIRD RAPTURES

THE sunrise wakes the lark to sing,
  The moonrise wakes the nightingale.
Come darkness, moonrise, everything
  That is so silent, sweet, and pale,
  Come, so ye wake the nightingale.

Make haste to mount, thou wistful moon,
  Make haste to wake the nightingale:
Let silence set the world in tune
  To hearken to that wordless tale
  Which warbles from the nightingale.

O herald skylark, stay thy flight
  One moment, for a nightingale
Floods us with sorrow and delight.
  To-morrow thou shalt hoist the sail;
  Leave us to-night the nightingale.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

From "THE BOAT ON THE SERCHIO"

THE stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there;
To tower and cavern and rift and tree
The owl and the bat fled drowsily.
Day had kindled the dewy woods,
  And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
  And the Apennines' shroud of summer snow,
And clothed with light of aery gold
The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.
Day had awakened all things that be;—
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free,
  And the milkmaid's song, and the mower's scythe,
And the matin-bell, and the mountain bee.
Fireflies were quenched on the dewy corn;
  Glow-worms went out on the river's brim,
  Like lamps which a student forgets to trim;
    The beetle forgot to wind his horn;
    The crickets were still in the meadow and hill.
    Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun,
    Night's dreams and terrors, every one,
    Fled from the brains which are their prey
    From the lamp's death to the morning ray.

SHELLEY.

XI.

MORNING—AUTUMN

From "PARADISE REGAINED"

AND now the sun with more effectual beams
Had cheer'd the face of earth, and dried the wet
From drooping plant, or drooping tree; the birds,
Who all things now behold more fresh and green,
After a night of storm so ruinous,
Clear'd up their choicest notes in bush and spray,
To gratulate the sweet return of morn.

MILTON.

From "THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH"

. . . rainbow-feathered birds that bloom
A moment on some autumn bough
That, with the spurn of their farewell,
Sheds its last leaves.

LOWELL.

From "AUTUMN"

. . . Through the trees
The golden robin moves. The purple finch,
That on wild cherry and red cedar feeds,
A winter bird, comes with its plaintive whistle,
And pecks by the witch-hazel, whilst aloud
From cottage roofs the warbling blue-bird sings. . .

LONGFELLOW.

From "THE LAND EAST OF THE SUN"

Most fair to peaceful heart was all,
Windless the ripe fruit down did fall,
The shadows of the large grey leaves
Lay grey upon the oaten sheaves.
By the garth-wall as he past by;
The startled ousel-cock did cry
As from the yew-tree by the gate
He flew; the speckled hen did wait
With outstretched neck his coming in,
The March-hatched cockerel gaunt and thin
Crowed shrilly, while his elder thrust
His stiff wing-feathers in the dust

That grew aweary of the sun:
The old and one-eyed cart-horse dun
The middenstead went hobbling round
Blowing the light straw from the ground.
With curious eyes the drake peered in
O'er the barn's dusk, where dust and din
Were silent now a little space.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

From "THE DUMB ORATORS"

As a male turkey straggling on the green,
When by fierce harriers, terriers, mongrels seen,
He feels the insult of the noisy train
And skulks aside, though moved by much disdain;
But when that turkey, at his own barn-door,
Sees one poor straying puppy and no more,
(A foolish puppy who had left the pack,
Thoughtless what foe was threat'ning at his back,)
He moves about, as ship prepared to sail,
He hoists his proud rotundity of tail,
The half-seal'd eyes and changeful neck he shows,
Where, in its quick'ning colours, vengeance glows;

From red to blue the pendent wattles turn,
Blue mix'd with red, as matches when they burn;
And thus th'intruding snarler to oppose,
Urged by enkindling wrath, he gobbling goes.
So look'd our hero in his wrath. . . .

CRABBE.

From

"HILDA AMONG THE BROKEN GODS"

O SHE knew that she was stupid; how I ever came to wed
Such a silly girl as she was, she never could make out;
But she could not keep the garden, if I would have every bed
Free for birds and beasts and creatures to write poetry about.

It was nice to hear the throstles answering on the evening breeze,
And to watch the short, sharp rushes of the blackbird on the lawn;
But there would not be a cherry left upon the loaded trees,
And the pease were black with cawing rooks about the early dawn.

WALTER C. SMITH.

From "ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY"

As well expect, should Pheidias carve Zeus' self
And set him up, some half a mile away,
His frown would frighten sparrows from your field
Eagles may recognise their lord, belike,
But as for vulgar sparrows, —change the god,
And plant some big Priapos with a pole!

BROWNING.

XII.

HUMAN

THE OWL AND THE LARK

I.

A GRIZZLED owl at midnight moped
Where thick the ivy glistened ;
So I, who long have vainly groped
For wisdom, leaned and listened.

II.

Its perch was firm, its aspect staid,
Its big eyes gleamed and brightened ;
Now, now at last will doubt be laid,
Now yearning be enlightened.

III.

"Tu-whit ! Tu-whoo !" the bird discoursed,
"Tu-whoo ! Tu-whit !" repeated :
Showing how matter was, when forced
Through space, condensed and heated ;

IV.

How rent, but spinning still, 'twas sphered
In star, and orb, and planet,
Where, as it cooled, live germs appeared
In lias, sand, and granite:

V.

And, last, since nothing 'neath the sun
Avoids material tether,
How life must end, when once begun,
In scale, and hoof, and feather.

VI.

Then, flapping from the ivy-tod,
It slouched around the gable,
And, perching there, discussed if God
Be God, or but a fable.

VII.

In pompous scales Free Will and Fate
Were placed, and poised, and dangled,
And riddles small from riddles great
Expertly disentangled.

VIII.

It drew betwixt "Tu-whit," "Tu-whoo,"
Distinctions nice and nicer:
The bird was very wise, I knew,
But I grew no whit wiser.

IX.

Then, letting metaphysics slip,
It mumbled moral thunder;
Showing how Virtue's self will trip
If Reason chance to blunder.

X.

Its pleated wings adown its breast
Were like a surplice folded;
And, if the truth must be confessed,
It threatened me and scolded.

XI.

I thought the lecture somewhat long,
Impatient for its ending;
When, sudden, came a burst of song!
It was the lark ascending.

XII.

Dew gleamed in many a jewelled cup,
The air was bright and gracious;
And away the wings and the song went up,
Up through the ether spacious.

XIII.

They bubbled, rippled, up the dome,
In sprays of silvery trilling;
Like endless fountain's lyric foam,
Still falling, still refilling.

XIV.

And when I could no more descry
The bird, I still could hear it;
For sight, but not for soul, too high,
Unseen but certain Spirit.

XV.

All that the perched owl's puckered brow
Had vainly bid me ponder,
The lark's light wings were solving now
In the roofless dome up yonder.

XVI.

Then brief as lightning-flash,—no more,—
I passed beyond the Finite;
And, borne past Heaven's wide-open door,
Saw everything within it.

XVII.

Slow showering down from cloudless sphere,
The wanderer Elysian
Dropped nearer, clearer, to the ear,
Then back into the vision.

XVIII.

On his own song he seemed to swim;
Diving through song, descended:
Since I had been to Heaven with him,
Earth now was apprehended.

XIX.

O souls perplexed by hood and cowl,
Fain would you find a teacher,
Consult the lark and not the owl,
The poet, not the preacher.

XX.

While brains mechanic vainly weave
  The web and woof of thinking,
Go, mount up with the lark, and leave
  The bird of wisdom blinking.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS

THE Jackdaw sat on the Cardinal's chair!
    Bishop and abbot, and prior were there;
  Many a monk, and many a friar,
  Many a knight, and many a squire,
With a great many more of lesser degree,—
In sooth a goodly company;
And they served the Lord Primate on bended knee.
  Never, I ween, Was a prouder seen,
Read of in books, or dreamt of in dreams,
Than the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims!

  In and out Through the motley rout,
That little Jackdaw kept hopping about;
  Here and there Like a dog in a fair,
  Over comfits and cates, And dishes and plates,

Cowl and cope, and rochet and pall,
Mitre and crosier! he hopp'd upon all!
  With saucy air, He perch'd on the chair
Where, in state, the great Lord Cardinal sat
In the great Lord Cardinal's great red hat;
And he peer'd in the face Of his Lordship's Grace,
With a satisfied look, as if he would say,
'We two are the greatest folks here to-day!'
  And the priests, with awe, As such freaks they saw,
Said, 'The Devil must be in that little Jackdaw!'

The feast was over, the board was clear'd,
The flawns and the custards had all disappear'd,
And six little Singing-boys,—dear little souls!
In nice clean faces, and nice white stoles,
  Came, in order due, Two by two,
Marching that grand refectory through!
A nice little boy held a golden ewer,
Emboss'd and fill'd with water, as pure
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur,
Which a nice little boy stood ready to catch
In a fine golden hand-basin made to match.
Two nice little boys, rather more grown,
Carried lavender-water, and eau de Cologne;
And a nice little boy had a nice cake of soap,
Worthy of washing the hands of the Pope.
  One little boy more, A napkin bore,

Of the best white diaper, fringed with pink,
And a Cardinal's Hat mark'd in 'permanent ink.'
The great Lord Cardinal turns at the sight
Of these nice little boys dress'd all in white:
From his finger he draws His costly turquoise;
And, not thinking at all about little Jackdaws,
Deposits it straight By the side of his plate,
While the nice little boys on his Eminence wait;
Till, when nobody's dreaming of any such thing,
That little Jackdaw hops off with the ring!

There's a cry and a shout, And a deuce of a rout,
And nobody seems to know what they're about,
But the monks have their pockets all turn'd inside out,
The friars are kneeling, And hunting, and feeling
The carpet, the floor, and the walls, and the ceiling.
The Cardinal drew Off each plum-colour'd shoe,
And left his red stockings exposed to the view;
He peeps, and he feels In the toes and the heels;
They turn up the dishes,—they turn up the plates,—
They take up the poker and poke out the grates,
—They turn up the rugs, They examine the mugs:—
But, no!—no such thing;—They can't find THE RING!

And the Abbot declared that, 'when nobody twigg'd it,
Some rascal or other had popp'd in, and prigg'd it!'
The Cardinal rose with a dignified look,
He call'd for his candle, his bell, and his book!
In holy anger, and pious grief,
He solemnly cursed that rascally thief!
He cursed him at board, he cursed him in bed;
From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head;
He cursed him in sleeping, that every night
He should dream of the devil, and wake in a fright;
He cursed him in eating, he cursed him in drinking,
He cursed him in coughing, in sneezing, in winking;
He cursed him in sitting, in standing, in lying;
He cursed him in walking, in riding, in flying;
He cursed him in living, he cursed him dying!—
Never was heard such a terrible curse!!
But what gave rise To no little surprise,
Nobody seem'd one penny the worse!

The day was gone, The night came on,
The Monks and the Friars they search'd till dawn;
When the Sacristan saw, On crumpled claw,
Come limping a poor little lame Jackdaw!

No longer gay, As on yesterday;
His feathers all seem'd to be turn'd the wrong way;—
His pinions droop'd—he could hardly stand,—
His head was as bald as the palm of your hand;
His eye so dim, So wasted each limb,
That, heedless of grammar, they all cried, 'THAT'S HIM!—
That's the scamp that has done this scandalous thing!
That's the thief that has got my Lord Cardinal's Ring!'
The poor little Jackdaw, When the monks he saw,
Feebly gave vent to the ghost of a caw;
And turn'd his bald head, as much as to say,
'Pray, be so good as to walk this way!'
Slower and slower He limp'd on before,
Till they came to the back of the belfry door,
Where the first thing they saw, Midst the sticks and the straw,
Was the RING in the nest of that little Jackdaw!

Then the great Lord Cardinal call'd for his book,
And off that terrible curse he took;
The mute expression Served in lieu of confession,
And, being thus coupled with full restitution,
The Jackdaw got plenary absolution!

—When those words were heard, That poor
little bird
Was so changed in a moment, 'twas really absurd,
He grew sleek, and fat; In addition to that,
A fresh crop of feathers came thick as a mat!
His tail waggled more Even than before;
But no longer it wagg'd with an impudent air,
No longer he perch'd on the Cardinal's chair.
He hopp'd now about With a gait devout;
At Matins, at Vespers, he never was out;
And, so far from any more pilfering deeds,
He always seem'd telling the Confessor's beads.
If any one lied,—or if any one swore,—
Or slumber'd in pray'r-time and happen'd to snore,
That good Jackdaw Would give a great 'Caw!'
As much as to say, 'Don't do so any more!'
While many remark'd, as his manners they saw,
That they 'never had known such a pious Jack-
daw!'
He long lived the pride Of that country side,
And at last in the odour of sanctity died;
When, as words were too faint His merits to paint,
The Conclave determined to make him a Saint;
And on newly-made Saints and Popes, as you know,
It's the custom, at Rome, new names to bestow,
So they canonized him by the name of Jim Crow!

THOMAS INGOLDSBY (R. H. BARHAM).

THE JACKDAW

THERE is a bird, who by his coat,
And by the hoarseness of his note,
Might be supposed a crow;
A great frequenter of the church,
Where bishop-like he finds a perch,
And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,
That turns and turns, to indicate
From what point blows the weather:
Look up—your brains begin to swim,
'Tis in the clouds—that pleases him,
He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,
Thither he wings his airy flight,
And there securely sees
The bustle and the raree show,
That occupy mankind below,
Secure and at his ease.

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses
On future broken bones and bruises,
If he should chance to fall.
No; not a single thought like that
Employs his philosophic pate,
Or troubles it at all.

He sees, that this great roundabout
The world, with all its motley rout,
Church, army, physic, law,
Its customs and its bus'nesses,
Is no concern at all of his,
And says—what says he?—Caw.

Thrice happy bird! I too have seen
Much of the vanities of men;
And, sick of having seen 'em,
Would cheerfully these limbs resign
For such a pair of wings as thine
And such a head between 'em.

COWPER.

From

"ODE TO RAE WILSON, ESQUIRE"

MEANWHILE the bees are chaunting a low hymn;
And lost to sight th' ecstatic lark above
Sings, like a soul beatified, of love,—
With, now and then, the coo of the wild pigeon;—
O Pagans, Heathens, Infidels, and Doubters!
If such sweet sounds can't woo you to religion,
Will the harsh voices of church cads and touters?

A man may cry Church! Church! at ev'ry word,
With no more piety than other people—
A daw's not reckon'd a religious bird
Because it keeps a-cawing from a steeple.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . there be on earth
A host of prides, some better and some worse;
But of all prides, since Lucifer's attaint,
The proudest swells a self-elected Saint.

To picture that cold pride so harsh and hard,
Fancy a peacock in a poultry yard.
Behold him in conceited circles sail,
Strutting and dancing, and now planted stiff,
In all his pomp of pageantry, as if
He felt "the eyes of Europe" on his tail!
As for the humble breed retain'd by man,
He scorns the whole domestic clan—
He bows, he bridles,
He wheels, he sidles,
At last, with stately dodgings, in a corner,
He pens a simple russet hen, to scorn her
Full in the blaze of his resplendent fan!

"Look here," he cries, (to give him words,)
"Thou feather'd clay,—thou scum of birds!"
Flirting the rustling plumage in her eyes,—
"Look here, thou vile predestin'd sinner,
Doom'd to be roasted for a dinner,
Behold these lovely variegated dyes!
These are the rainbow colours of the skies,
That heav'n has shed upon me *con amore*—
A Bird of Paradise?—a pretty story!
I am that Saintly Fowl, thou paltry chick!
Look at my crown of glory!
Thou dingy, dirty, dabbled, draggled jill!"
And off goes Partlet, wriggling from a kick,
With bleeding scalp laid open by his bill!

That little simile exactly paints
How sinners are despis'd by saints.

. . . . .

. . . . .

The Saints!—the aping Fanatics that talk
All cant and rant and rhapsodies highflown—
That bid you baulk
A Sunday walk,
And shun God's work as you should shun your own.

HOOD.

From "TRUTH"

The self-applauding bird, the peacock, see—
Mark what a sumptuous pharisee is he!
Meridian sun-beams tempt him to unfold
His radiant glories, azure, green, and gold:
He treads as if, some solemn music near,
His measur'd step were govern'd by his ear:
And seems to say—Ye meaner fowl, give place,
I am all splendour, dignity, and grace!
Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
Though he too, has a glory in his plumes.
He, christianlike, retreats with modest mien
To the close copse, or far-sequester'd green,
And shines without desiring to be seen.

COWPER.

From "THE COMEDY OF ERRORS"

ACT IV. SCENE III

Dromio of Syracuse. "Fly pride," says the peacock.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE RAVEN"

OPEN here I flung the shutter, when, with many a
flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days
of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute
stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my
chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my
chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into
smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance
it wore.

"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

. . . .

. . . .

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

. . . .

. . . .

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the
    distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels
    name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels
    name Lenore."
        Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!"
    I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's
    Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul
    hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust
    above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy
    form from off my door!"
        Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is
    sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber
    door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's
    that is dreaming

And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his
shadow on the floor,
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating
on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

From "TROILUS AND CRESSIDA"

ACT II. SCENE III.

Ulysses. The raven chides blackness.

SHAKESPEARE.

From

"SECOND PART OF KING HENRY VI"

ACT III. SCENE II.

King Henry. What! doth my lord of Suffolk
comfort me?
Came he right now to sing a raven's note,
Whose dismal tune bereft my vital powers;
And thinks he, that the chirping of a wren,
By crying comfort from a hollow breast,
Can chase away the first-conceivèd sound?

SHAKESPEARE



Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I'll pyke out his bonnie blue een;
Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair
We'll theek our nest when it grows bare.
THE TWA CORBIES (*Old Ballad*)

From "TITUS ANDRONICUS,"

ACT II. SCENE III.

Some say that ravens foster forlorn children,
The whilst their own birds famish in their nests.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

BOOK II. CANTO XII.

Suddeinly an innumerable flight
Of harmefull fowles about them fluttering cride,
And with their wicked wings them ofte did smight,
And sore annoyed, groping in that griesly night.

Even all the nation of unfortunate
And fatall birds about them flocked were,
Such as by nature men abhorre and hate;
The ill-faste owle, deaths dreadfull messengere;
The hoars night-raven, trump of dolefull drere;

The lether-wingèd batt, dayes enimy;
The ruefull strich, still waiting on the bere;
The whistler shrill, that whoso heares doth dy;
The hellish harpyes, prophets of sad destiny:

All those, and all that els does horror breed,
About them flew, and fild their sayles with feare:
Yet stayd they not, but forward did proceed,
Whiles th' one did row, and th' other stifly steare;
Till that at last the weather gan to cleare,
And the faire land itselfe did playnly show.
Said then the palmer, "Lo! where does appeare
The sacred soile where all our perills grow!
Therefore, Sir Knight, your ready arms about you
throw."

SPENSER.

From "THE NIGHT OF SLAUGHTER"

THUS chanced it that his wandering glances turned
Into the fig-tree's shadows, where there perched
A thousand crows, thick-roosting, on its limbs;
Some nested, some on branchlets, deep asleep,
Heads under wings—all fearless; nor, O Prince!
Had Aswatthâman more than marked the birds,
When, lo! there fell out of the velvet night,

Silent and terrible, an eagle-owl,
With wide, soft, deadly, dusky wings, and eyes
Flame-coloured, and long claws, and dreadful beak;
Like a winged sprite, or great Garood himself,
Offspring of Bhârata! it lighted there
Upon the banian's bough; hooted, but low,
The fury smothering in its throat;—then fell
With murderous beak and claws upon those crows,
Rending the wings from this, the legs from that,
From some the heads, of some ripping the crops;
Till, tens and scores, the fowl rained down to eart
Bloody and plucked, and all the ground waxed black
With piled crow-carcases; whilst the great owl
Hooted for joy of vengeance, and again
Spread the wide, deadly, dusky wings.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

From "HELLAS"

. . . NINE thousand perished!
We met the vultures, legioned in the air,
Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind:
They, screaming from their cloudy mountain peaks,

Stooped through the sulphurous battle-smoke, and
perched
Each on the weltering carcass that we loved,
Like its ill angel or its damnèd soul
Riding upon the bosom of the sea.

SHELLEY.

From "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

BOOK IV. CANTO III.

As when a vulture greedie of his pray,
Through hunger long that hart to him doth lend,
Strikes at an heron with all his bodies sway,
That from his force seemes nought may it defend;
The warie fowle, that spies him toward bend
His dreadfull souse, avoydes it, shunning light,
And maketh him his wing in vaine to spend;
That with the weight of his owne weeldlesse might
He falleth nigh to ground, and scarse recovereth
flight.

SPENSER.

From "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

BOOK III. CANTO IV.

But nothing might relent her hasty flight;
So deepe the deadly feare of that foul swaine
Was earst impressèd in her gentle spright:
Like as a fearefull dove, which through the raine
Of the wide ayre her way does cut amaine,
Having farre off espyde a tassell gent,
Which after her his nimble winges doth straine,
Doubleth her hast for feare to bee for-hent,
And with her pineons cleaves the liquid fermament.

SPENSER.

PHILLIS THE FAIR

While larks, with little wing,
  Fanned the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring,
  Forth I did fare;

Gay the sun's golden eye
Peeped o'er the mountains high
Such thy morn! did I cry,
  Phillis the fair.

In each bird's careless song,
  Glad did I share;
While yon wild flowers among,
  Chance led me there:
Sweet to the opening day,
Rosebuds bent the dewy spray;
Such thy bloom! did I say,
  Phillis the fair.

Down in a shady walk,
  Doves cooing were;
I marked the cruel hawk
  Caught in a snare;
So kind may Fortune be—
Such make his destiny—
He who would injure thee,
  Phillis the fair.

BURNS.

From

"THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE"

SHE has set three feathers in her waist,
And crossed two on her eye,
And a white, white dove flies up in haste
Into the windy sky.

He dipped one feather in bitter water,
And cast it over his back,
And a raven, with beak fresh dipped in slaughter,
Sailed up in the white dove's track.

The dove and raven rise and rise
In ever-narrowing ring,
Till both are lost in breathless skies,
And hear the angels sing.

Yet they seem no nearer to any star,
Though they see neither tree nor hill;
But the harps of heaven ring very far
When the noise of earth is still.

Faster and faster on they go,
The raven and the dove;
And now the white dove flies below,
The raven mounts above.

He stooped, he swerved, he frayed the hair
That held the cross of glass;
Was it a rustle in the air,
Or did an angel pass?

The white dove rose on wings of snow,
The cross of crystal fell;
It smote the raven such a blow,
It smote him down to hell.

The white dove, weary and alone,
Dropped down the western wind,
And thought she heard the raven groan,
And flap strong wings behind.

She drifted against the convent bars,
Where the pale sister sings
Her lonely song to the lonely stars,
And there she broke her wings.

She has fluttered on to the nun's thin hand,
And the nun has kissed her warm,
Bound the broken wings with a tender band,
And soothed her from the storm.

She crossed her twice with care and heed,
For she thought she might have spoken;
But the little wounds began to bleed,
And the sister knew the token.
So the little dove sang of dumb happy rest
All day, all night, on the sister's breast,
Though the wide white wings were broken.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SIMCOX.

From "GOOD-MORROW"

The carrion crow that lothsome beast,
Which cries against the raine,
Both for her hue, and for the rest,
The divell resembleth plaine:
And as with gunnes we kill the crow,
For spoiling our releef,
The divell so must we overthrow,
With gunshot of beléef.

The little birds which sing so swéet,
Are like the angels voice,
Which render God his praises méet,
And teach us to rejoice:

And as they more estéem that merth,
Than dread the night's annoy,
So much we déem our dayes on erth
But hell to heavenly ioy.

GEORGE GASCOIGNE.

From "LUCRECE"

145.

"The crow may bathe his coal-black wings in mire,
And unperceiv'd fly with the filth away;
But if the like the snow-white swan desire,
The stain upon his silver down will stay."

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE WORST OF IT"

I.

Would it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide; not you, the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan, undo!

II.

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out again,
  Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
When I found my swan and the cure was plain;
  The dull turned bright as I caught your white
On my bosom: you saved me—saved in vain
  If you ruined yourself, and all through me!

BROWNING.

THE LEGEND OF THE CROSSBILL

(From the German of Julius Mosen.)

On the cross the dying Saviour
  Heavenward lifts his eyelids calm,
Feels, but scarcely feels, a trembling
  In his pierced and bleeding palm.

And by all the world forsaken,
  Sees he how with zealous care
At the ruthless nail of iron
  A little bird is striving there.

Stained with blood and never tiring,
With its beak it doth not cease,
From the cross 'twould free the Saviour,
Its Creator's Son release.

And the Saviour speaks in mildness:
"Blest be thou of all the good!
Bear, as token of this moment,
Marks of blood and holy rood!"

And that bird is called the crossbill;
Covered all with blood so clear.
In the groves of pine it singeth
Songs, like legends, strange to hear.

LONGFELLOW.

From "THE SPIRIT"

"Is there no road but by those gibbets?"
"No road," the woman replied.
"But though with the wind each murderer swings
They both of them are harmless things,
And so are the ravens beside."

"What! are there ravens there?—those creatures
That are so black and blue!
But, are they ravens? I inquire,
For I have heard by the winter's fire,
That phantoms the dead pursue."

The woman replied, "They are night-ravens
That pick the dead men's eyes;
And they cry qua, with their hollow jaw;
Methinks I one this moment saw!
To the banquet at hand he flies."

SOUTHEY.

From "THE FAMILIST'S HYMN"

ROUND our fired and wasted homes
Flits the forest-bird unscared,
And at noon the wild beast comes
Where our frugal meal was shared:
For the song of praises there
Shrieks the crow the livelong day;
For the sound of evening prayer,
Howls the evil beast of prey!

WHITTIER.

From "THE HAUNTED HOUSE"

O'ER all there hung a shadow and a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

. . . . . .

The wren had built within the porch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn,—within its turfy mound,—
The rabbit made his burrow.

. . . . . .

The wary crow, — the pheasant from the woods —
Lull'd by the still and everlasting sameness,
Close to the Mansion, like domestic broods,
Fed with a "shocking tameness."

The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted

The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
  That on a stone, as silently and stilly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
    To guard the water-lily.

No sound was heard, except, from far away,
  The ringing of the Whitwall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
    That Echo murmur'd after.

But Echo never mock'd the human tongue;
  Some weighty crime, that Heaven could not pardon,
A secret curse on that old Building hung,
    And its deserted Garden.

HOOD.

From "THE DESERTED VILLAGE"

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.

No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest:
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries;
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land.

GOLDSMITH.

From "YOUNG KENNEDY"

"O! shepherd of Braco, look well to thy flock,
The piles of Glen Ardochy murmur, and jar;
The rook and the raven converse from the rock,
The beasts of the forest are howling afar.
Shrill pipes the goss-hawk his dire tidings to tell,
The grey mountain-falcon accords with his yell;
Aloft on bold pinion the eagle is borne,
To ring the alarm at the gates of the morn."

HOGG.

From "THE PARABASIS"

(Spoken by the Birds.)

OUR antiquity proved, it remains to be shown
That Love is our author and master alone ;
Like him we can ramble, and gambol and fly
O'er ocean and earth, and aloft to the sky :
And all the world over, we're friends to the lover,
And when other means fail, we are found to prevail,
When a Peacock or Pheasant is sent as a present.
All lessons of primary daily concern
You have learnt from the Birds, and continue to learn,
Your best benefactors and early instructors ;
We give you the warning of seasons returning.
When the Cranes are arranged, and muster afloat
In the middle air, with a creaking note,
Steering away to the Libyan sands,
Then careful farmers sow their lands ;
The crazy vessel is haul'd ashore,
The sail, the ropes, the rudder, and oar
Are all unshipp'd and housed in store.

The shepherd is warned, by the Kite re-appearing,
To muster his flock, and be ready for shearing.
You quit your old cloak at the Swallow's behest,
In assurance of summer, and purchase a vest.
For Delphi, for Ammon, Dodona, in fine
For every oracular temple and shrine,
The Birds are a substitute equal and fair,
For on us you depend, and to us you repair
For counsel and aid when a marriage is made,
A purchase, a bargain, a venture in trade:
Unlucky or lucky, whatever has struck ye,
An ox or an ass that may happen to pass,
A voice in the street, or a slave that you meet,
A name or a word, by chance overheard,
If you deem it an omen, you call it a *Bird;*
And if birds are your omens, it clearly will follow
That birds are a proper prophetic Apollo.

ARISTOPHANES.
Translated by JOHN HOOKHAM FRERE.

"QUATRAINS"

THE PHŒNIX.

WHEN Adam ate of that forbidden food,
  Sole bird that shared not in his sin was I :
And so my life is evermore renewed,
  And I among the dying never die.

THE PELICAN.

I am the bird that from my bleeding breast
  Draw the dear stream that nourishes my brood,
And feebly unto men his love attest,
  True pelican, that feeds them with his blood.

THE HALCYON.

For twice seven days, in winter's middle rage,
  The winds are hushed, the billows are at rest ;
Heaven all for me their fury doth assuage,
  While I am brooding o'er my fluctuant nest.

THE COCK.

What time an ass with horrid bray you hear,
  Believe he sees a wicked sprite at hand;
But when I make my carol loud and clear,
  Know that an angel doth before me stand.

THE SAME.

I, clapping on my sides my wings with might,
  First to myself the busy morn proclaim:
Who others will to tasks and toil incite,
  Should first himself have summoned to the
    same.

. . . . . .

THE PEACOCK.

I, glorying in my tail's extended pride,
  See my foul legs, and then I shriek outright;
So shrieks a human soul, which has descried
  Its baseness 'mid vainglorious self-delight.

THE EAGLE.

I no degenerate progeny will raise,
  But try my callow offspring, which will look
In the sun's eye with peremptory gaze;
  Nor other nurslings in my nest will brook.

. . . . . .

THE NIGHTINGALE.

Leaning my bosom on a pointed thorn,
I bleed, and bleeding sing my sweetest strain;
For sweetest songs of saddest hearts are born,
And who may here dissever love and pain?

RICHARD CHEVENIX TRENCH.

From "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

BOOK IV. CANTO VIII.

Well said the wiseman, now prov'd true by this
Which to this gentle squire did happen late,
That the displeasure of the mighty is
Than death itselfe more dread and desperate;
For naught the same may calme, ne mitigate,
Till time the tempest doe thereof delay
With sufferaunce soft, which rigour can abate,
And have the sterne remembrance wypt away
Of bitter thoughts, which deepe therein infixed lay.

Like as it fell to this unhappy boy,
Whose tender heart the faire Belphebe had
With one sterne looke so daunted, that no ioy
In all his life, which afterwards he lad

He ever tasted; but with penaunce sad
And pensive sorrow pind and wore away,
Ne ever laught, ne once shew'd countenance glad;
But alwaies wept and wailed night and day,
As blasted bloosme through heat doth languish and decay.

Till on a day, as in his wonted wise
His doole he made, there chaunst a turtle dove
To come where he his dolors did devise,
That likewise late had lost her dearest love,
Which losse her made like passion also prove:
Who, seeing his sad plight, her tender heart
With deare compassion deeply did emmove,
That she gan mone his undeserved smart,
And with her dolefull accent beare with him a part.

hee sitting by him, as on ground he lay,
Her mournefull notes full piteously did frame,
And thereof made a lamentable lay,
So sensibly compyld that in the same
Him seemed oft he heard his owne right name,
With that he forth would poure so plenteous teares,
And beat his breast unworthy of such blame,
And knocke his head, and rend his rugged heares,
That could have perst the hearts of tigres and of beares.

Thus, long this gentle bird to him did use
Withouten dread of perill to repaire
Unto his wonne, and with her mournefull muse
Him to recomfort in his greatest care,
That much did ease his mourning and misfare:
And every day, for guerdon of her song,
He part of his small feast to her would share;
That, at the last, of all his woe and wrong
Companion she became, and so continued long.

Upon a day, as she him sate beside,
By chance he certain miniments forth drew,
Which yet with him as relickes did abide
Of all the bounty which Belphebe threw
On him, whilst goodly grace she did him shew:
Amongst the rest a iewell rich he found,
That was a ruby of right perfect hew,
Shap'd like a heart yet bleeding of the wound,
And with a little golden chaine about it bound.

The same he tooke, and with a riband new,
In which his ladies colours were, did bind
About the turtles necke, that with the vew
Did greatly solace his engrieved mind.
All unawares the bird, when she did find

Herselfe so dekt, her nimble wings displaid,
And flew away as lightly as the wind:
Which sodaine accident him much dismaid;
And, looking after long, did marke which way she
straid.

But whenas long he looked had in vaine,
Yet saw her forward still to make her flight,
His weary eie returned to him againe,
Full of discomfort and disquiet plight,
That both his iuell he had lost so light,
And eke his deare companion of his care.
But that sweet bird departing flew forthright,
Through the wide region of the wastfull aire,
Untill she came where wonned his Belphebe
faire.

There found she her (as then it did betide)
Sitting in covert shade of arbors sweet,
After late wearie toile which she had tride
In salvage chase, to rest as seem'd her meet.
There she, alighting, fell before her feet,
And gan to her mournfull plaint to make,
As was her wont, thinking to let her weet
The great tormenting griefe that for her sake
Her gentle squire through her displeasure did
pertake.

She, her beholding with attentive eye,
At length did marke about her purple brest
That precious iuell, which she formerly
Had knowne right well with colourd ribbands drest:
Therewith she rose in hast, and her addrest
With ready hand it to have reft away:
But the swift bird obayd not her behest,
But swarv'd aside, and there againe did stay;
She follow'd her, and thought againe it to assay.

And ever, when she nigh approcht, the dove
Would flit a little forward, and then stay
Till she drew neare, and then againe remove:
So tempting her still to pursue the pray,
And still from her escaping soft away:
Till that at length into that forrest wide
She drew her far, and led with slow delay:
In th' end she her unto that place did guide,
Whereas that wofull man in languor did abide.

SPENSER.

From "THE GAY GOSS-HAWK"

"O WALY, waly, my gay goss-hawk,
  Gin your feathering be sheen;"
"And waly, waly, my master dear,
  Gin ye look pale and lean.

"O have ye tint at tournament,
  Your sword, or yet your spear?
Or mourn ye for the Southern lass,
  Whom you may not win near?"

"I have na tint at tournament,
  My sword nor yet my spear;
But sair I mourn for my true love,
  Wi' mony a bitter tear.

"O well is me, my gay goss-hawk
  Ye can baith speak and flee;
Ye sall carry a letter to my love,
  Bring an answer back to me."

"But how sall I your true love find,
  Or how should I her knaw?
I bear a tongue ne'er wi' her spak,
  An eye that ne'er her saw."

"O weel sall ye my true love ken,
Sae sune as ye her see;
For o' a' the flowers o' fair England,
The fairest flower is she.

"The red that's on my true love's cheek
Is like blood draps on the snaw;
The white, that is on her bare breast,
Like the down o' the white sea maw."

. . . . .

Lord William has written a love-letter,
Put it under his pinion grey;
And the bird is awa' to Southern land,
As fast as wings can gae.

And even at that lady's bower,
There grew a flowering birk;
And he sat down and sung thereon,
As she gaed to the kirk.

And weel he kent that ladye fair
Amang her maidens free;
For the flower that springs in May morning,
Was na sae sweet as she.

He lighted at the ladye's yett,
And sat him on a pin;
And sang fu' sweet the notes of love,
Till a' was cosh within.

And first he sang a low note,
And syne he sang a clear;
And aye the o'erword o' the sang
Was—"Your love can no win here."

"Feast on, feast on, my maidens a',
The wine flows you amang;
While I gang to my shot-window,
And hear yon bonny bird's sang.

"Sing on, sing on, my bonny bird,
The sang ye sung yestreen;
For weel I ken by your sweet sang,
Ye hae my true love seen."

O first he sang a merry sang,
And syne he sang a grave;
And syne he pecked his feathers grey,
To her the letter gave.

"Have there a letter from Lord William,
He says he's sent ye three;
He canna wait your love langer,
But for your sake he'll dee."

"Gae bid him bake his bridal bread,
And brew his bridal ale;
And I shall meet him at Mary's Kirk,
Lang, lang ere it be stale."

From "YOUNG HUNTIN"

THEN up and spak the popinjay,
That sat aboon her heid,
"Ladye keep weel your green cleidin
Frae gude young Huntin's bleid"

"O I'll keep better my green cleidin
Frae ae drap o' his bleid,
Than thou canst keep thy chattering tongue,
That brattles in thy heid."

THE PARROT

(TRANSLATION FROM THE LATIN.)

IN painted plumes superbly dress'd,
A native of the gorgeous east,
By many a billow toss'd,
Poll gains at length the British shore,
Part of the captain's precious store,
A present to his toast.

Belinda's maids are soon preferr'd,
To teach him now and then a word,
As Poll can master it;
But 'tis her own important charge,
To qualify him more at large,
And make him quite a wit.

Sweet Poll! his doating mistress cries,
Sweet Poll! the mimic bird replies
And calls aloud for sack.
She next instructs him in the kiss;
'Tis now a little one like Miss,
And now a hearty smack.

At first he aims at what he hears;
And, list'ning close with both his ears,
Just catches at the sound
But soon articulates aloud,
Much to th' amusement of the crowd,
And stuns the neighbours round.

A querulous old woman's voice
His hum'rous talent next employs;
He scolds, and gives the lie.
And now he sings, and now is sick,
Here Sally, Susan, come, come quick,
Poor Poll is like to die!

Belinda and her bird! 'tis rare,
To meet with such a well-match'd pair,
The language and the tone,
Each character in ev'ry part
Sustain'd with so much grace and art,
And both in unison.

When children first begin to spell,
And stammer out a syllable,
We think them tedious creatures;
But difficulties soon abate,
When birds are to be taught to prate,
And women are their teachers.

COWPER.

From "THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

ACT III. SCENE V.

Lorenzo. . . . I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence; and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots.

SHAKESPEARE.

SOLILOQUY OF A WATER-WAGTAIL ON THE WALLS OF YORK CASTLE

On the walls that guard my prison,
Swelling with fantastic pride,
Brisk and merry as the season,
I a feather'd coxcomb spied:
When the little hopping elf
Gaily thus amused himself.

"Hear your sovereign's proclamation,
All good subjects, young and old:
I'm the Lord of the Creation;
I—a Water-Wagtail bold!
All around, and all you see,
All the world, was made for Me!

"Yonder sun, so proudly shining,
Rises—when I leave my nest;
And, behind the hills declining,
Sets—when I retire to rest:
Morn and evening, thus you see,
Day and night, were made for Me!

"Vernal gales to love invite me;
Summer sheds for me her beams;
Autumn's jovial scenes delight me;
Winter paves with ice my streams;
All the year is mine, you see;
Seasons change, like moons, for ME!

"On the heads of giant mountains,
Or beneath the shady trees;
By the banks of warbling fountains,
I enjoy myself at ease:
Hills and valleys, thus you see,
Groves and rivers, made for ME!

"Boundless are my vast dominions;
I can hop, or swim, or fly;
When I please, my towering pinions
Trace my empire through the sky:
Air and elements, you see,
Heaven and earth, were made for ME!

"Birds and insects, beasts and fishes,
All their humble distance keep;
Man, subservient to my wishes,
Sows the harvest which I reap:
Mighty man himself, you see,
All that breathe were made for ME!

"'Twas for my accommodation
Nature rose when I was born;
Should I die—the whole creation
Back to nothing would return:
Sun, moon, stars, the world, you see,
Sprung—exist—will fall—with ME!"

Here the pretty prattler, ending,
Spread his wings to soar away;
But a cruel Hawk descending,
Pounced him up—an helpless prey:
Could'st thou not, poor Wagtail! see,
That the Hawk was made for THEE?

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

April 15th, 1796.

From "THE PRISONER OF CHILLON"

CANTO X.

A LIGHT broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,

And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track;
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,
   And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
   And seem'd to say them all for me!
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seem'd like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
   Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
   Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in wingèd guise,
A visitant from Paradise;

For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile—
I sometimes deem'd that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me:
But then at last away it flew,
And then 't was mortal well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,—
Lone—as the corse within its shroud,
Lone—as a solitary cloud,—
  A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
  When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

BYRON.

From "THE MANCIPLE'S TALE"

TAKE any brid, and put it in a cage,
And do all thin entente, and thy corage,
To foster it tendrely with mete and drinke
Of alle deintees that thou canst bethinke,
And kepe it al so clenely as thou may;
Although the cage of gold be never so gay,

Yet had this brid, by twenty thousand fold,
Lever in a forest, that is wilde and cold,
Gon eten wormes, and swiche wretchednesse.
For ever this brid will don his besinesse
To eschape out of his cage whan that he may :
His liberty the brid desireth ay.

CHAUCER

ON A GOLDFINCH,

STARVED TO DEATH IN HIS CAGE.

Time was when I was free as air,
The thistle's downy seed my fare,
        My drink the morning dew ;
I perch'd at will on ev'ry spray,
My form genteel, my plumage gay,
        My strains for ever new.

But gaudy plumage, sprightly strain,
And form genteel, were all in vain,
        And of a transient date ;
For caught, and cag'd, and starv'd to death,
In dying sighs my little breath
        Soon pass'd the wiry grate.

Thanks, gentle swain, for all my woes,
And thanks for this effectual close
And cure of ev'ry ill;
More cruelty could none express,
And I, if you had shown me less,
Had been your pris'ner still.

COWPER.

From "THE LADY OF THE LAKE"

"THE captive thrush may brook the cage,
The prison'd eagle dies for rage."

SCOTT.

From "INSCRIPTIONS." XVI.

Dost thou not love
The sounds that speak enjoyment? oh, if not,
If thou wouldst rather with inhuman ear
Hark to the warblings of some wretched bird
Bereft of freedom, sure thine heart is dead
To each good feeling, and thy spirit void
Of all that softens or ennobles man.

SOUTHEY.



From "TO HYMEN"

Yet will the lark in iron cage inthrall'd,
Chaunt forth her hymn to greet the morning sun,
As wide his brilliant beam
Illumes the landskip round;
As distant 'mid the woodland haunts is heard
The feather'd quire, she chaunts her prison'd hymn,
And hails the beam of joy,
Of joy to her denied.

SOUTHEY.

From "MELANCHOLY HUMOURS"

The owl, that makes the night her day, delights yet in the dark;
But I am forced to play the owl, that have been bred a lark.
The eagle from the lowest vale can mount the lofty sky;
But I am fallen from down the hill, and in the vale must die. . . .

BRETON.

SONNET

SICKNESS.

As when a sea-gull, customed long to sweep
With breezy range from shimmering sea to sea,
In revelry of wafture fair and free,
O'er the broad bosom of the boundless deep;
Him now an idle boy, after a storm,
Hath caught, and pruned his wing, and closely barred
All outlet from the farmer's narrow yard,
Where he must hop about from worm to worm,
A sorry sight to see. So me, once king
Of thoughts far-stretching, and far-wandering ways,
Mischance hath caught, and clipt my venturous wing,
And chained me to a round of deedless days,
With all life's organ-hymns of high desire
Sunk to the creakings of a broken lyre!

JOHN STUART BLACKIE.

From "THE FAERIE QUEENE"

BOOK III. CANTO I.

WHO means no guile, be guiled soonest shall,
And to faire semblaunce doth light faith annexe;
The bird, that knowes not the false fowlers call,
Into his hidden nett full easely doth fall.

SPENSER.

From "CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS"

HATH cut a pipe of pithless elder joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
"I make the cry my maker cannot make
"With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!"
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

BROWNING.

From "MACBETH"

ACT IV. SCENE II.

Lady Macduff. Sirrah, your father's dead.
And what will you do now? How will you live?
Son. As birds do, mother.
Lady M. What, with worms and flies?
Son. With what I get, I mean; and so do they
Lady M. Poor bird! thou'dst never fear the net, nor lime,
The pit-fall, nor the gin.
Son. Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "THE SAILOR'S MOTHER"

TRAVELLER.

But how came it
He chose to be a sailor?

WOMAN.

You shall hear, Sir;
As he grew up he used to watch the birds
In the corn,—child's work you know, and easily done.
'Tis an idle sort of task; so he built up
A little hut of wicker-work and clay
Under the hedge, to shelter him in rain.
And then he took, for very idleness,
To making traps to catch the plunderers;
All sorts of cunning traps that boys can make—
Propping a stone to fall and shut them in,
Or crush them with its weight, or else a springe
Swung on a bough. He made them cleverly,
And I,—poor foolish woman! I was pleased
To see the boy so handy. You may guess
What follow'd, Sir, from this unlucky skill.
He did what he should not when he was older:
I warn'd him oft enough; but he was caught
In wiring hares at last, and had his choice—
The prison or the ship.

SOUTHEY.

From "TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY"

REJOICE, ye birring paitricks[1] a';
Ye cootie[2] moorcocks, crousely[3] craw;
Ye mawkins, cock your fud fu' braw,
Withouten dread;
Your mortal fae is now awa'—
Tam Samson's dead!

. . . .

. . . .

There low he lies in lasting rest;
Perhaps upon his mouldering breast
Some spitefu' moorfowl bigs her nest,
To hatch and breed;
Alas! nae mair he'll them molest!
Tam Samson's dead! . . .

BURNS.

[1] Whirring partridges. [2] Feather-legged. [3] Gleefully.

From "WINDSOR FOREST"

SEE! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings:
Short is his joy; he feels the fiery wound,
Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground.
Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?

POPE.

From "MARMION"

ON wing of jet, from his repose
In the deep heath, the black-cock rose:
Sprung from the gorse the timid roe,
Nor waited for the bending bow;
And when the stony path began,
By which the naked peak they wan,
Up flew the snowy ptarmigan.

SCOTT.

From "WINDSOR FOREST"

WITH slaughtering guns the unwearied fowler roves,
When frosts have whiten'd all the naked groves;
Where doves in flocks the leafless trees o'ershade
And lonely woodcocks haunt the watery glade.
He lifts the tube, and levels with his eye;
Straight a short thunder breaks the frozen sky.
Oft, as in airy rings they skim the heath,
The clamorous lapwings feel the leaden death:
Oft, as the mounting larks their notes prepare,
They fall, and leave their little lives in air.

POPE.

From "ESSAY ON MAN"

EPISTLE III.

HAS God, thou fool! work'd solely for thy good,
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?

. . . . . .

Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.

Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?
Loves of his own and raptures swell the note.

. . . . . .

Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?
The birds of heaven shall vindicate their grain.

POPE.

From "TWELFTH-NIGHT"

ACT IV. SCENE II.

Clown. What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild-fowl?

Malvolio. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

Clo. What thinkest thou of his opinion?

Mal. I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion.

Clo. Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness: thou shalt hold the opinion of Pythagoras, ere I will allow of thy wits; and fear to kill a woodcock, lest thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. Fare thee well.

SHAKESPEARE.

XIII.

COMPANIONS—MIGRATION WINTER

SONNET

BEAUTY AND THE BIRD.

SHE fluted with her mouth as when one sips,
And gently waved her golden head, inclin'd
Outside his cage close to the window-blind;
Till her fond bird, with little turns and dips,
Piped low to her of sweet companionships.
And when he made an end, some seed took she
And fed him from her tongue, which rosily
Peeped as a piercing bud between her lips.

And like the child in Chaucer, on whose tongue
The Blessed Mary laid, when he was dead,
A grain,—who straightway praised her name in song:
Even so, when she, a little lightly red,
Now turned on me and laughed, I heard the throng
Of inner voices praise her golden head.

D. G. ROSSETTI.

From "THE SPANISH GYPSY"

O bird that used to press
  Thy head against my cheek
  With touch that seemed to speak
And ask a tender "yes"—
          Ay de mi, my bird!

O tender downy breast
  And warmly beating heart,
  That beating seemed a part
Of me who gave it rest—
          Ay de mi, my bird!

GEORGE ELIOT.

From "ELEGIAC POEMS"

What was thy life? a bird in infant's hand
  Held with too slight a grasp, and which, before
He knows or fears, its pinions doth expand,
  And with a sudden impulse heavenward soar.

RICHARD CHEVENIX TRENCH.

From "THE DYING IMPROVISATORE"

But like a lute's brief tone,
Like a rose-odour on the breezes cast,
Like a swift flush of dayspring, seen and gone,
So hath my spirit passed -

Pouring itself away
As a wild bird amidst the foliage turns
That which within him triumphs, beats, or burns,
Into a fleeting lay;

That swells, and floats, and dies,
Leaving no echo to the summer woods
Of the rich breathings and impassioned sighs
Which thrilled their solitudes.

MRS. HEMANS.

From "HAS SORROW THY YOUNG DAYS SHADED"

. . . . .

Has hope, like the bird in the story
  That flitted from tree to tree
With the talisman's glittering glory—
  Has hope been that bird to thee?
On branch after branch alighting,
  The gem did she still display,
And when nearest and most inviting,
  Then waft the fair gem away?

MOORE.

From "MORAL ESSAYS"

EPISTLE II.

Pleasures the sex, as children birds, pursue,
Still out of reach, yet never out of view;
Sure, if they catch, to spoil the toy at most;
To covet flying, and regret when lost. . . .

POPE.

"THE BANKS O' DOON"

YE banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
  How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair;
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
  And I sae weary, fu' o' care?
Thou'll break my heart, thou warbling bird,
  That wantons through the flowering thorn.
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
  Departed—never to return!

Oft ha'e I roved by bonnie Doon,
  To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
  And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
  Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause lover stole my rose,
  But, ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

BURNS.

From "OTHER DAYS"

O Thrush, your song is passing sweet,
But never a song that you have sung
Is half so sweet as thrushes sang
When my dear love and I were young.

LEWIS MORRIS.

SONNET XXV.

WINGED HOURS.

Each hour until we meet is as a bird
That wings from far his gradual way along
The rustling covert of my soul, - his song
Still loudlier trilled through leaves more deeply stirr'd:
But at the hour of meeting, a clear word
Is every note he sings, in Love's own tongue.
Yet, Love, thou know'st the sweet strain suffers wrong,
Full oft through our contending joys unheard.

What of that hour at last, when for her sake
  No wing may fly to me nor song may flow;
  When, wandering round my life unleaved, I know
The bloodied feathers scattered in the brake,
  And think how she, far from me, with like eyes
Sees through the untuneful bough the wingless
    skies?

D. G. ROSSETTI.

From

"LOVE LETTERS OF A VIOLINIST, &c."

FROM LETTER IX.

AND sweet To-morrow, like a golden bark,
  Will call for me, and lead me on apace
  To where I shall behold, in all her grace,
Mine own true Lady, whom a happy lark
Did late salute, appointing, after dark,
  A nightingale to carol in his place

ERIC MACKAY.

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

A LITTLE bird flew my window by,
'Twixt the level street and the level sky,
The level rows of houses tall,
The long low sun on the level wall;
And all that the little bird did say
Was "Over the hills and far away."

A little bird sang behind my chair,
From the level line of corn-fields fair,
The smooth green hedge-row's level bound
Not a furlong off—the horizon's bound,
And the level lawn where the sun all day
Burns:—"Over the hills and far away."

A little bird sings above my bed,
And I know if I could but lift my head
I would see the sun set, round and grand,
Upon level sea and level sand,
While beyond the misty distance gray
Is "Over the hills and far away."

I think that a little bird will sing
Over a grassy mound next spring,
Where something that once was *me*, ye'll leave
In the level sunshine, morn and eve:
But I shall be gone, past night, past day,
Over the hills and far away.

THE AUTHOR OF
"JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

THE STARLINGS

EARLY in spring time, on raw and windy mornings,
Beneath the freezing house-eaves I heard the starlings sing—
'Ah dreary March month, is this then a time for building wearily?
Sad, sad, to think that the year is but begun.'

Late in the autumn, on still and cloudless evenings,
Among the golden reed-beds I heard the starlings sing—
'Ah that sweet March month, when we and our mates were courting merrily;
Sad, sad, to think that the year is all but done.'

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

From

"AFTERNOON AT A PARSONAGE"

WHEN the dimpled water slippeth,
Full of laughter, on its way,
And her wing the wagtail dippeth,
Running by the brink at play;
When the poplar leaves atremble
Turn their edges to the light,
And the far-up clouds resemble
Veils of gauze most clear and white;
And the sunbeams fall and flatter
Woodland moss and branches brown,
And the glossy finches chatter
Up and down, up and down:
Though the heart be not attending,
Having music of her own,
On the grass, through meadows wending,
It is sweet to walk alone.

When the falling waters utter
Something mournful on their way,
And departing swallows flutter,
Taking leave of bank and brae;

When the chaffinch idly sitteth
  With her mate upon the sheaves,
And the wistful robin flitteth
  Over beds of yellow leaves;
When the clouds, like ghosts that ponder
  Evil fate, float by and frown,
And the listless wind doth wander
  Up and down, up and down:
Though the heart be not attending,
  Having sorrows of her own,
Through the fields and fallows wending,
  It is sad to walk alone.

JEAN INGELOW.

From "HOME WOUNDED"

In the tower there used to be
A solitary tree.
Take me there, for the dear sake
Of those old days wherein I loved to lie
And pull the melilote,
And look across the valley to the sky,
And hear the joy that filled the warm wide
  hour
Bubble from the thrush's throat,

As into a shining mere
Rills some rillet trebling clear,
And speaks the silent silver of the lake
There mid cloistering tree-roots, year by year,
The hen-thrush sat, and he, her lief and dear,
Among the boughs did make
A ceaseless music of her married time,
And all the ancient stones grew sweet to hear,
And answered him in the unspoken rhyme
Of gracious forms most musical
That tremble on the wall
And trim its age with airy fantasies
That flicker in the sun, and hardly seem
As if to be beheld were all,
And only to our eyes
They rise and fall,
And fall and rise,
Sink down like silence, or a-sudden stream
As wind-blown on the wind, as streams a wedding chime.

SYDNEY DOBELL.

From "JAMES LEE'S WIFE"

III.

IN THE DOORWAY.

I.

THE swallow has set her six young on the rail,
And looks sea-ward. . . .

BROWNING.

From "THE TREASURE OF HOPE"

O FAIR bird, singing in the woods,
To the rising and the setting sun,
Does ever any throb of pain
Thrill through thee ere thy song be done:
Because the summer fleets so fast;
Because the autumn fades so soon;
Because the deadly winter treads
So closely on the steps of June?

LEWIS MORRIS.

A REMEMBRANCE OF AUTUMN

I.

NOTHING stirs the sunny silence,--
  Save the drowsy humming of the bees
    Round the rich, ripe peachès on the wall,
  And the south wind sighing in the trees,
    And the dead leaves rustling as they fall:
  While the swallows, one by one, are gathering,
    All impatient to be on the wing,
  And to wander from us, seeking
                Their belovèd Spring!

II.

Cloudless rise the azure heavens!
  Only vaporous wreaths of snowy white
    Nestle in the grey hill's rugged side;
  And the golden woods are bathed in light,
    Dying, if they must, with kingly pride:
  While the swallows in the blue air wheeling,
    Circle now an eager fluttering band,
  Ready to depart and leave us
                For a brighter land!

III.

But a voice is sounding sadly,
Telling of a glory that has been ;
Of a day that faded all too fast—
See afar through the blue air serene,
Where the swallows wing their way at last,
And our hearts perchance, as sadly wandering,
Vainly seeking for a long-lost day.
While we watch the far-off swallows,
Flee with them away !

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

From

"SONG OF THE NEGRO BOATMAN"

We pray de Lord : he gib us signs
Dat some day we be free ;
De norf-wind tell it to de pines,
De wild-duck to de sea ;
We tink it when de church-bell ring,
We dream it in de dream ;
De rice-bird mean it when he sing,
De eagle when he scream.

WHITTIER.

From "A DOUBTING HEART"

WHERE are the swallows fled?
Frozen and dead,
Perchance upon some bleak and stormy shore.
Oh doubting heart!
Far over purple seas,
They wait in sunny case
The balmy southern breeze,
To bring them to their northern homes once more

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

From "TIMON OF ATHENS"

ACT III. SCENE VI.

2 *Lord.* The swallow follows not summer more willing, than we your lordship.

Timon (*Aside*). Nor more willingly leaves winter: such summer-birds are men.

SHAKESPEARE.

From "AURORA LEIGH"

LIKE swallows, which the exasperate, dying year
Sets spinning in black circles, round and round,
Preparing for far flights o'er unknown seas.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "TALES OF THE HALL"

BOOK XIII.

FAR to the left he saw the huts of men,
Half hid in mist that hung upon the fen;
Before him swallows, gathering to the sea,
Took their short flights, and twitter'd on the lea.

CRABBE.

BIRDS IN AN AUTUMN SKY

WHEEL, wheel, ye birds, about the cheerless sky,
  Above the vapours, the rose winter-bloom
Facing the sunset; in clear circles high
Rise with a shrill, preluding muster-cry,

Since not for song but flight
Ye curve and spread
In such harmonious clusters overhead!
The gale with a sea-strength doth doom
Your woods: ye have no nest-ward care.
Why should ye stay?
The mist is full of burden and decay,
The passing of the forest-leaves, the soft
Drip of the hedge-rows; from the oak
The acorn severs: with victorious stroke
Winnow the cumbered air, rise, eddy, sway—
The sap is in your pinions—press aloft
Through the illimitable gray,
Compass sky-regions bare!
Soon as I find
That life's soft bowers lie ruined in my sight,
Prompted as ye,
Ah, if I might
Rove with as confident tranquillity
Athwart the uncommunicating wind!

MICHAEL FIELD.

(From *The Contemporary Review*, March 1889.)

From "COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY"

The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Why should they wait for winter-time? 'Tis
instinct. . . .

BROWNING.

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

Black shadows fall
From the lindens tall,
That lift aloft their massive wall
Against the southern sky;

And from the realms
Of the shadowy elms
A tide-like darkness overwhelms
The fields that round us lie.

But the night is fair,
And everywhere
A warm, soft vapour fills the air,
And distant sounds seem near;

And above, in the light
Of the star-lit night,
Swift birds of passage wing their flight
Through the dewy atmosphere.

I hear the beat
Of their pinions fleet,
As from the land of snow and sleet
They seek a southern lea.

I hear the cry
Of their voices high
Falling dreamily through the sky,
But their forms I cannot see.

O, say not so!
Those sounds that flow
In murmurs of delight and woe
Come not from wings of birds.

They are the throngs
Of the poets' songs,
Murmurs of pleasures, and pains, and wrongs
The sound of wingèd words.

This is the cry
Of souls, that high
On toiling, beating pinions fly,
Seeking a warmer clime.

From their distant flight
Through realms of light
It falls into our world of night,
With the murmuring sound of rhyme.

LONGFELLOW.

THE BIRDS OF PASSAGE

BIRDS, joyous birds of the wandering wing!
Whence is it ye come with the flowers of spring?
"We come from the shores of the green old Nile,
From the land where the roses of Sharon smile,
From the palms that wave through the Indian sky,
From the myrrh-trees of glowing Araby.

"We have swept o'er cities in song renowned—
Silent they lie with the deserts round!
We have cross'd proud rivers whose tide hath roll'd
All dark with the warrior-blood of old:
And each worn wing hath regained its home,
Under peasant's roof-tree or monarch's dome."

And what have ye found in the monarch's dome,
Since last ye traversed the blue sea's foam?—
"We have found a change, we have found a pall,
And a gloom o'ershadowing the banquet's hall,
And a mark on the floor as of life-drops spilt—
Nought looks the same, save the nest we built!"

O joyous birds, it hath still been so;
Through the halls of kings doth the tempest go!
But the huts of the hamlet lie still and deep,
And the hills o'er their quiet a vigil keep.
Say what have ye found in the peasant's cot,
Since last ye parted from that sweet spot?

"A change we have found there--and many a
change!
Faces, and footsteps, and all things strange!
Gone are the heads of the silvery hair,
And the young, that were, have a brow of care,
And the place is hush'd where the children play'd—
Nought looks the same, save the nest we made!"

Sad is your tale of the beautiful earth,
Birds that o'ersweep it in power and mirth!
Yet through the wastes of the trackless air
Ye have a guide, and shall *we* despair?
Ye over desert and deep have pass'd—
So may *we* reach our bright home at last!

MRS. HEMANS.

TO THE SAND GROUSE[1]

Why come ye from the tawny waste
Of the Mongolian plains,
To seek through leagues of stranger air
Our Western storms and rains?

Deep in the hollows of that land
Where some rare water gleams,
Ye bask among the flowers and seeds
Of oleandered streams.

These warm and pebbly colours show
Your native home to be
In lands that since the raging flood
Have never seen the sea.

[1] (The sand grouse (*Syrraptes Paradoxus*) inhabits the deserts of Central Asia from the Caspian to the Wall of China. It is a bird of immense powers of flight, ranging for thousands of miles in vast flocks over the great spaces which afford it food and water. In 1863 some strange migratory impulse brought numerous coveys to Western Europe, and to the British Isles. This year (1888) a similar impulse has brought them here in much greater numbers; and in numerous localities they are supposed to be breeding. Its plumage is very beautiful, closely resembling the colours of the desert. The feet are very peculiar, having only three toes, and these small, and glued together close up to the claws.)

What thought ye of that vaster plain
Rippling its thousand waves,
Its ships, its freight of living men,
And all its "wandering graves?"

As wide horizons may have lain
Under your ranging flight
Where the great Oxus rolls her sands
Through quivering fields of light.

Or when from Afghan hills and rocks
Your arrowy course was hurled
To Ganges from the Pamir steppe,
The roof-tree of the world.

But never since your little feet
Pattered among the stones
Have ye e'er heard the ocean roar
Or sing its undertones.

What mystic impulse, then, has brought
Your pinions to our West?
Why thought ye on our scraps of sand
To find a home or rest?

Did ye but follow on the march
That changed the world's rude face,
First scattering broadcast the seeds
Of our great Aryan race?

Or was it that ye longed to see,
    Far down the setting flame,
The mighty fountains whence Aral
    And your own Caspian came?

So may we wing our searching course.
    And guide our lines of flight,
To the great deeps which still have left
    Some little pools of light.

THE DUKE OF ARGYLL (1888).
(From *Good Words*.)

From "ENDYMION"

Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd,
Down marble steps; pouring as easily
As hour-glass sand— and fast, as you might see
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

KEATS.

From "THE EPIC OF HADES."

I TURNED away
Like some white bird that leaves the flock, which sails
High in mid air above the haunts of men,
Feeling some little dart within her breast,
Not death, but like to death, and slowly sinks
Down to the earth alone, and bears her hurt
Unseen, by herbless sand and bitter pool,
And pines until the end.

LEWIS MORRIS.

From "NEW-YEAR'S EVE"

THE building rook 'ill caw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering grave.

TENNYSON.

From

"ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD"

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
  The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
  No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

GRAY.

From "VIOLIN SONGS"

SPRING SONG.

Days of old,
Ye are not dead, though gone from me;
  Ye are not cold,
But like the summer-birds fled o'er some sea.
The sun brings back the swallows fast
  O'er the sea:
When he cometh at the last,
The days of old come back to me.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

From "POEMS BY A PAINTER"

O'ER cornfield and fallow,
O'er headland and shallow,
The white mist is trailing,
The sea-birds are sailing,
And shrieking and wailing
  In pain.

SIR NOEL PATON.

From "SNOW-BOUND"

WE . . . .
Saw where in sheltered cove and bay
The duck's black squadron anchored lay,
And heard the wild-geese calling loud
Beneath the grey November cloud.

. . . .

Our uncle, innocent of books,
Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,

. . . . .

. . . . .

Himself to Nature's heart so near
That all her voices in his ear
Of beast or bird had meanings clear.

He told how teal and loon he shot,
And how the eagle's eggs he got,
The feats on pond and river done,
The prodigies of rod and gun;
Till, warming with the tales he told,
Forgotten was the outside cold,
The bitter wind unheeded blew,
From ripening corn the pigeons flew,
The partridge drummed i' the wood, the mink
Went fishing down the river-brink.

WHITTIER.

From "THE HYMN OF WINTER"

NATURE sleeps fast while I relax no breath:
  Within the bleak grey air the very rooks
Wing with infrequent flight: I breathe cold death
  Where frozen kingfishers haunt sedgy brooks
  And where amidst the snow-clad fields the hares
    Shiver, and skylarks with numbed pinions lie
      Songless for ever now on alien ground:
  All that was once so joyous wanly wears
    A shroud of white, and mournful melancholy
      In silence broods and hearkens to no sound.

WILLIAM SHARP.

DESOLATE

FROM the sad eaves the drip-drop of the rain!
The water washing at the latchel door;
A slow step plashing by upon the moor!
A single bleat far from the famished fold;
The clicking of an embered hearth and cold;
The rainy Robin tic-tac at the pane.

"So as it is with thee
Is it with me,
So as it is and it used not to be,
With thee used not to be,
Nor me."
So singeth Robin on the willow tree,
The rainy Robin tic-tac at the pane.

Here in this breast all day
The fire is dim and low,
Within I care not to stay,
Without I care not to go.
A sadness ever sings
Of unforgotten things,

And the bird of love is patting at the pane;
But the wintry water deepens at the door,
And a step is plashing by upon the moor
Into the dark upon the darkening moor,
And alas, alas, the drip-drop of the rain!

SYDNEY DOBELL.

TO A ROBIN RED-BREAST SINGING IN WINTER

Oh light of heart and wing,
Light-hearted and light-winged, that dost cheer
With song of sprightliest note the waning year,
Thou canst so blithely sing,
That we must only chide our own dull heart,
If in thy music we can bear no part.

Thy haunts are winter-bare,
The leaves in which thou didst so lately keep
Are being trodden to a miry heap;
But thou art void of care,
And singest not the less, or rather thou
Hast kept thy best and boldest notes till now

Thou art so bold to sing
Thy sweetest music in the saddest hour,
Because thy trust is in the love and power,
Which can bring back the spring,
Which can array the naked groves again,
And paint with seasonable flowers the plain.

But we are merely sad,
When as for us this earthly life has shed
The leaves that once arrayed it; and instead
Of rich boughs, foliage-clad,
A few bare sticks and twigs stand nakedly,
Fronting against the cold and angry sky.

Yet would we only see
That hope and joy, the growth of lower earth,
Fall from us, that another truer birth
Of the same things may be;
That the new buds are travelling up behind,
Though hid as yet beneath the naked rind,

We should not then resign
All gladness, when spring promises depart,
But 'mid our wintriest bareness should find heart
To join our songs with thine,
Strong to fulfil, in spirit and in voice,
That hardest of all precepts—to rejoice.

RICHARD CHEVENIX TRENCH.

From "THE WINTER WALK AT NOON"

No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppress'd;
Pleas'd with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendant drops of ice,
That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence.

COWPER.

From "WINTER"

How large that thrush looks on the bare thorn-
tree!
A swarm of such, three little months ago,
Had hidden in the leaves and let none know
Save by the outburst of their minstrelsy.
A white flake here and there—a snow-lily

Of last night's frost—our naked flower-beds
hold;
And for a rose-flower on the darkling mould
The hungry redbreast gleams. No bloom, no bee.

D. G. ROSSETTI.

From "WINTER"

THE soil, that erst so seemly was to seen,
Was all despoilèd of her beauty's hue;
And soot[1] fresh flowers, wherewith the Summer's
queen
Had clad the earth, now Boreas' blasts down blew;
And small fowls flocking, in their song did rue
The winter's wrath, wherewith each thing defac'd
In woeful wise bewail'd the summer past.

LORD BUCKHURST.

From "THE SNOWDROP IN THE SNOW"

To silent woods stark famished winds have driven
The last lean robin—gibbering winds of fear!

SYDNEY DOBELL.

[1] Sweet.

From "LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST"

ACT V. SCENE II.

SONG.

Winter. When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail.
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
To-who;
To-whit, to-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
To-who;
To-whit, to-who, a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE TITMOUSE

You shall not be overbold
When you deal with arctic cold,
As late I found my lukewarm blood
Chilled wading in the snow-choked wood.
How should I fight? my foeman fine
Has million arms to one of mine:
East, west, for aid I looked in vain,
East, west, north, south, are his domain.
Miles off, three dangerous miles, is home;
Must borrow his winds who there would
come.
Up and away for life! be fleet!—
The frost-king ties my fumbling feet,
Sings in my ears, my hands are stones,
Curdles the blood to the marble bones,
Tugs at the heart-strings, numbs the sense,
And hems in life with narrowing fence.
Well in this broad bed lie and sleep,—
The punctual stars will vigil keep,—
Embalmed by purifying cold;
The winds shall sing their dead-march old,

The snow is no ignoble shroud,
The moon thy mourner, and the cloud.

Softly,—but this way fate was pointing,
'Twas coming fast to such anointing,
When piped a tiny voice hard by,
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,
Chic-chicadeedee! saucy note
Out of sound heart and merry throat,
As if it said, "Good day, good sir!
Fine afternoon, old passenger!
Happy to meet you in these places,
Where January brings few faces."

This poet, though he lived apart,
Moved by his hospitable heart,
Sped, when I passed his sylvan fort,
To do the honours of his court,
As fits a feathered lord of land;
Flew near, with soft wing grazed my hand,
Hopped on the bough then, darting low,
Prints his small impress on the snow,
Shows feats of his gymnastic play,
Head downward, clinging to the spray.

Here was this atom in full breath,
Hurling defiance at vast death;

This scrap of valour just for play
Fronts the north-wind in waistcoat grey,
As if to shame my weak behaviour;
I greeted loud my little saviour,
You pet! what dost here? and what for?
In these woods, thy small Labrador,
At this pinch wee San Salvador!
What fire burns in that little chest
So frolic, stout, and self-possest?

Henceforth I wear no stripe but thine;
Ashes and jet all hues outshine.
Why are not diamonds black and grey,
To ape thy dare-devil array?
And I affirm, the spacious North
Exists to draw thy virtue forth.
I think no virtue goes with size;
The reason of all cowardice
Is, that men are overgrown,
And, to be valiant, must come down
To the titmouse dimension."

'Tis good-will makes intelligence,
And I began to catch the sense
Of my bird's song: "Live out of doors
In the great woods, on prairie floors.
I dine in the sun; when he sinks in the sea,
I too have a hole in a hollow tree;

And I like less when Summer beats
With stifling beams on these retreats,
Than noontide twilights which snow makes
With tempest of the blinding flakes.
For well the soul, if stout within,
Can arm impregnably the skin;
And polar frost my frame defied,
Made of the air that blows outside."

With glad remembrance of my debt,
I homeward turn; farewell, my pet!
When here again thy pilgrim comes,
He shall bring store of seeds and crumbs.
Doubt not, so long as earth has bread,
Thou first and foremost shalt be fed;
The Providence that is most large
Takes hearts like thine in special charge,
Helps who for their own need are strong,
And the sky doats on cheerful song.
Henceforth I prize thy wiry chant
O'er all that mass and minster vaunt;
For men mis-hear thy call in Spring,
As 'twould accost some frivolous wing,
Crying out of the hazel copse, *Phe-be!*
And, in winter, *Chic-a-dee-dee!*
I think old Caesar must have heard
In northern Gaul my dauntless bird,

And, echoed in some frosty wold,
Borrowed thy battle-numbers bold.
And I will write our annals new,
And thank thee for a better clew,
I, who dreamed not when I came here,
To find the antidote of fear,
Now hear thee say in Roman key,
Pæan! Veni, vidi, vici

EMERSON.

From

"SONGS OF THE WINTER NIGHTS"

I.

In the white garden lies a heap
As brown as deep-dug mould:
A hundred partridges that keep
Each other from the cold.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

From "A WINTER NIGHT"

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers through the leafless bower,
When Phœbus gi'es a short-lived glower
Far south the lift.[1]
Dim darkening through the flaky shower,
Or whirling drift:

. . . .

. . . .

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cower thy chittering wing
An' close thy e'e?

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

I heard nae mair, for Chanticleer
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hailed the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing craw

BURNS.

[1] Sky.

From "THE PLEA OF THE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES"

"Wherefore, great King of Years, as thou dost love
The raining music from a morning cloud,
When vanish'd larks are carolling above,
To wake Apollo with their pipings loud;—
If ever thou hast heard in leafy shroud
The sweet and plaintive Sappho of the dell,
Show thy sweet mercy on this little crowd,
And we will muffle up the sheepfold bell
Whene'er thou listenest to Philomel."

HOOD.

From "QUEEN MAB"

No longer now the wingèd habitants
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.

SHELLEY.

INDEX

INDEX OF AUTHORS' NAMES

THE END.

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